The Chicago Catholic Worker Movement 1936 to the Present

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THE CHICAGO CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT
1936 TO THE PRESENT

by
Francis Joseph Sicius

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

January
1979
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express appreciation to my director Professor James Penick and to the other members of my committee, Professors Robert McCluggage and Harold Platt. A special thanks is due Professor William Miller who first introduced me to the Catholic Worker Movement.

I am also thankful to the Arthur J. Schmidt Foundation for providing a stipend which allowed me a free year to write this study. In addition I am especially grateful to the many librarians and archivists who helped me with this work, particularly those kind people at Marquette University Archives.

Finally my deepest debt is to those people of the Catholic Worker movement who shared their homes, hospitality, and lives with me. To them and their aspirations this work is dedicated.
PREFACE

By advocating their religion as a means to temper the world rather than withdraw from it, the Catholic Worker movement added a new dimension to American Catholic thought in the twentieth century. Traditionally, the Church had concentrated on shielding its many immigrant followers from the prejudices of a suspicious America. By the 1930's, however, there emerged a generation materially and intellectually secure enough to demand a new role for their Church. They believed that their religion offered new approaches to resolving contemporary problems. Impatient with, but not disaffected from their Church, these Catholics, mostly laymen, began organizing themselves first into study groups and then into movements of social action.

It was in this intellectually and spiritually fecund environment that the Catholic Worker movement developed. Founded in 1933 by Peter Maurin, a former Christian Brother from France, and Dorothy Day, a Socialist who had converted to Catholicism, the Catholic Worker offered a concept of a socially involved Church.
The Catholic Worker movement was guided by the idea of personalism. Unlike its counterpart in Europe, personalism in America, as historian David O'Brien points out, was stripped of its intellectual refinements.

Instead it was activist, emphasizing the responsibility of each individual Christian to live his Faith by assisting his neighbor at a personal sacrifice. It stressed personal sanctity and holiness and... an apostolic desire to improve the lot of mankind. It sought to realize love of neighbor through personal commitment and voluntary action.

"Personal commitment" brought the Catholic Worker face to face with every major social conflict since 1933. During the Depression years the movement supported the workers by maintaining strikelines, soup kitchens, and refuges. When the Nazi movement and its implications became known, the Catholic Worker movement supported Jews against Hitler and his followers in America. When World War II broke out, many Catholic Workers, following personalist commitments of conscience, became pacifists. In the fifties the movement represented the small minority of Catholics who opposed McCarthy and in the latter half of that decade, the group protested against air raid drills for maintaining "a war psychosis" among the people.

In the sixties, a new generation of reformers discovered an old ally in the Catholic Worker movement. In
1965, when Tom Cornell received national attention for burning his draft card, he told reporters that he had been inspired by Karl Meyer, a Chicago Catholic Worker who had performed a similar act of civil disobedience in the 1950's.

During the 1930's Catholic Worker houses sprang up in every major city in the country. In 1936 the Catholic Worker movement emerged in Chicago. From that time to the present the Chicago Worker has exerted a significant influence not only on the movement but on American Catholic thought in general.

Many exceptional individuals who have had a significant impact on Catholic thought in the second half of the twentieth century have emerged out of the Catholic Worker movement. Together with many other lesser figures, these people have contributed a major chapter in the history of the American Catholic Church.
VITA

The author was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1949. He received his primary and secondary education in various parochial schools throughout the Philadelphia area. In 1971 he received his B.A. in history at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Two years later he received his Master of Arts degree from the same institution. In addition to being an Arthur J. Schmidt Foundation Fellow for the academic year 1976-77, the author has taught history at both Loyola University of Chicago and Florida State University. He is currently a researcher for the Historic Tallahassee Preservation Board.
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CHAPTER I

ORIGINS OF THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT

Most Americans share a faith in material progress. They look forward to a point in time which promises universal prosperity. This view of the future also reveals their past, since throughout their history Americans have hopefully been moving toward that anticipated era. As Henry Steele Commager has pointed out, "American thought, like American character, was permeated with optimism . . . in the infinite possibilities of human development . . . ."¹ Americans believed that nature, their land, and their history all substantiated these suppositions concerning perfectibility in time. And they viewed impediments to progress, Commager observed, "as an outrage."²

One such aversion to progress occurred in the 1930's when the usually bright future became clouded by the shadow of economic collapse. During this decade no end to

²Ibid.
the tragedy appeared and many sought new forms by which to order their lives. Almost overnight vague ideas became mass movements as people sought new forms with which to recreate their universe.

One group which emerged from the intellectual ferment of the thirties was the Catholic Worker Movement. This organization developed from a common interest shared by a number of people in a new periodical being published in New York City. The editors of this paper fed the poor, ran a shelter for unemployed workers, and called themselves Catholic radicals. What generated the most interest in this group was the paper they published. It contained articles suggesting that inherent in the Church's teaching there existed a radical social and economic plan which, they boldly claimed, could rescue the world from its present crisis. Many people made similar claims in the thirties, what surprised readers of the Catholic Worker was that this group based their ideas on Catholic theology.

In an intellectual milieu nurtured on Enlightenment concepts of progress, social plans based on Catholic philosophy were, at the very least, obtuse. However, historically the Church had always played a role in social and economic issues. When Pope John XXIII declared in his
famous encyclical "Mater et Magister" that the Church must have a concern "for the needs of man's daily life . . . his education . . ., and his general welfare . . ." he was merely reiterating a traditional function of the Church.³ As one theologian has pointed out, "The ever recurring problems springing from the evolution of social and economic conditions will always be examined in the light of the same [Church] principles."⁴ It was this view of religion that the Catholic Worker attempted to introduce in the thirties.

This idea of the Church, however, remained far from the mind of the average Catholic at that time. Unlike its counterpart in Europe, the American Catholic Church derived the bulk of its congregation from poor immigrants. Therefore, it lacked the large middle class necessary to become a strong social force in this country.

Richard Hofstadter observed,

One might have expected Catholicism to have added a distinctive leaven to the intellectual dialogue in America, bringing as it did a different sense of the


past and the world, a different awareness of the human condition. . . .

But upon entering this country, Catholics lacked the security, education, and other means necessary to take part in the luxury of social planning. Rather than use their Church as a basis for confronting social inequalities, they hid within its walls, sheltering themselves from the disability of being foreign born. Even those who in their native country had shunned the Church discovered a new interest for it in America, as it remained the only familiar institution in an otherwise alien world.

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6 The apparent lack of an American Catholic intellectual tradition has been an ongoing debate among Catholic scholars since John Tracy Ellis first raised the issue in 1955. Reflecting the critical self evaluation of other intellectuals at the time Ellis expressed the opinion that, "The weakest aspect of the Church in this country lies in its failure to produce national leaders and to exert commanding influence in intellectual circles." See: John Tracy Ellis, American Catholicism and the Intellectual Life (Chicago: Heritage Foundation, 1955), p. 16. See also: Edward Watkin and Joseph Scheur, The De-Romanization of the Catholic Church (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1966). Chapter fourteen of this work entitled "The Intellectual" reviews the debate which Ellis precipitated. For Ellis' impressions on the debate he started, see John Tracy Ellis, Perspectives in American Catholicism (Baltimore: Benedictine Studies, 1963), pp. 249-260.

Due to the nature of its congregation, the Catholic Church rarely confronted American society with any exceptions to this generalization concerning the Church in America were Issac Hecker and Orestes Brownson who were both converts to the Church. Brownson, a journalist in the mid-nineteenth century, was nicknamed "Weathercock Brownson" by his colleagues. This was due to his frequent philosophical conversions. "His predominant passion," wrote Issac Hecker, "was love of truth." This "passion" led him from Unitarianism, to Universalism, to the Transcendentalists at Brook Farm, and finally to Catholicism. In the Catholic Church he felt the least uncomfortable, but even here he remained restless. Papal infallibility and devotion to Rome troubled him. He wanted to modernize the Church so that it might become a universal religion. His desire to Americanize the Catholic Church brought the wrath of the Irish-American hierarchy upon him. In his journal the Quarterly Review he not only defended Catholicism against nativist attacks but also urged Catholics to shed their foreign stigma and Americanize their Faith.

Issac Hecker, a contemporary of Brownson's but a few years younger, came under the same influences of Transcendentalism, Universalism and finally the Catholic Church. Carrying his commitment even further than Brownson, Hecker became a Catholic priest. Hecker came to believe that Catholicism provided the most favorable environment in which American democracy could prosper, since Catholics by their nature were suspicious of man-made institutions and would hold them under constant scrutiny. Hecker founded an order of priests called Paulists named after St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. These priests dedicated themselves to the conversion of America to Catholicism and Catholicism to Americanism. Hecker also published a journal entitled Catholic World which is the oldest active Catholic journal in this country. See: A. M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Pilgrim's Progress (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1966) and Ralph Gabriel, The Course of Democratic Thought (New York: Ronald Press, 1940), Chapter Five. The tradition begun by these two men was carried on by a minority of clerics in this country who became outspoken around the end of the century. This budding movement of American Catholic Intellectualism was abruptly curtailed in 1898 when the
provocative social or intellectual movement. The Catholic Church became for the most part what theologians call an eschatological Church. It adopted a view which minimized the significance of worldly matters, and maintained that it was futile to attempt altering the condition of the world. A Church guided by this theology believed that its most important function was to become a refuge for its members from the profanity of the world. This was the dominant view of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Catholic Church. During this period Catholics joined Church oriented clubs, maintained separate institutions, and sent their children to parochial schools.

Throughout the nineteenth century Europe witnessed the development of numerous Catholic groups which promised to rebuild society in a more Christian tradition. In Pope condemned this new commingling of Catholicism with democracy as a heresy, which he called Americanism. See: Thomas McAvoy, "Americanism and Frontier Catholicism," Review of Politics 5 (July 1943): 275-301.


A. R. Vidler, A Century of Social Catholicism
America similar ideas among Catholics never took root. When at the end of the nineteenth century Leo XIII issued his encyclical "Rerum Novarum" which dealt with conditions of the working class in Europe and America, it remained practically ignored in this country. In this encyclical, the Pope condemned liberal capitalism which allowed the rich to "lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than slavery itself." \(^{11}\) Leo also condemned socialism in the same proclamation, citing its lack of concern for individual rights and the right to property. He asserted that property provided security and integrity for workers, allowing them to be economically independent, and he hoped that a just wage would include enough salary for a worker to acquire property. \(^{12}\) The only Americans, except for a few socially conscious priests, who quoted the


\(^{12}\) Pope John XXIII, The Church and Social Progress, pp. 34-37.
papal letter were those financially successful Catholics who used it to cite the Pope's support of private property and his opposition to socialism. Little was said in this country regarding the Pope's condemnation of liberal capitalism or his defense of the working class.13

In 1931, forty years after Leo XIII's encyclical, Pope Pius XI issued another statement on social conditions. By this time American Catholics had been sufficiently tempered by the war, and disillusioned by the depression, to accept the idea that their Church should attempt to add a dimension of understanding to the problems that confronted their country.14 Although most Catholics accepted the


14By the end of the First World War American Catholics began to shed their immigrant label and at least on a hierarchical level began to voice an opinion on secular issues. The most significant example of this new emergence was the formation of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference headed by Monsignor John Ryan. But this new interest was short lived. In the twenties with the re-emergence of the Klan, the reaction of liberals to the persecution of the Church in Mexico, the successful implementation of prohibition, and the prejudice displayed during the Smith campaign, Catholics, including most priests and bishops once again seemed to retreat into their churches, keeping their religious and social views to themselves. See: Francis Broderick, Right Reverend New Dealer (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 165-185; also: O'Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform, p. 45.
propositions of Pius XI which called for active Church involvement in worldly affairs, they were intellectually unprepared for such a departure. Therefore, the burden of carrying the Church into the area of social reform fell upon the traditional leaders of the Church, the bishops and priests. The most socially active duty most Catholics could perform in this era was to support Franklin Delano Roosevelt after prelates such as Bishop Karl Alter of Toledo declared that the President's inaugural address breathed "the spirit of the Holy Father's recent encyclical, 'Quadragessimo Anno'."\textsuperscript{15}

In this environment the Catholic Worker emerged. The new tabloid quoted papal encyclicals, the early Church Fathers, and the most important Catholic thinkers in modern Europe, in order to explain the role that each Catholic should play in helping to recreate the social order. The beginning of the movement which evolved around the Catholic Worker paper marked the first time in this country that a group of lay Catholics proposed their Faith as a basis for social action. Catholic Worker study groups sprang up in

most cities. Soon, across the country, loosely associated groups of students, priests, and social activists began a new movement which they called the "Catholic Worker movement." Membership in this group was simple, if one accepted the propositions put forth in the paper, one was a "Catholic Worker."¹⁶ One of the most significant of these early associations was the group that emerged in Chicago. Many who reached intellectual maturity while members of this group had in later life a profound effect on American Catholicism in the latter half of the twentieth century.¹⁷ Among its members were John Cogley, who edited Commonweal magazine while it was becoming the leading laymen's Catholic journal in the country, James O'Gara, the present editor of Commonweal, and Ed Marciniak, a leader in Catholic Social Action who is presently president of the Institute for Urban Life, a Catholic foundation dedicated to redeeming urban America.

¹⁶This movement evolved around a journal and both had the same name and no other, therefore, for the purpose of clarity when the word Catholic Worker is italicized it refers to the paper, when it is not italicized (Catholic Worker) it refers to the movement or to a particular member of the movement.

¹⁷O'Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform, p. 206.
The Chicago Catholic Worker movement actually began in New York where for many years it existed merely as one of the many ideas proclaimed by numerous prophets who frequented Union Square New York City. Dorothy Day has usually been credited with founding the Catholic Worker since it was her energy which transformed the idea into a movement, but the philosophy which guided her belonged to Peter Maurin.

In an introduction to his biography, Dorothy Day predicted that "there will be more books written on Peter Maurin [since] his ideas have already influenced the entire field of Catholic social action." Affirming this view, one Catholic scholar has pointed out, "Many of the leaders of Catholic social action today began their activities in the Catholic Worker and from it learned lessons in sacrifice and responsibility that transformed their lives." For this reason Donald Gallagher maintains, when the definitive history of the American Catholic Church is written, "the Catholic Worker [which originated from Maurin's ideas] will merit a major chapter."
The main idea behind the Catholic Worker movement was Maurin's conception of a Catholic Church which would replace the modernistic values of individualism and competition with traditional values of community and cooperation. He felt the latter to be more common to Western civilization and the former a perversion of recent origin.²⁰

Being a Frenchman, Maurin as a young man had come under the intellectual influence of Pope Leo XIII's efforts to reconcile Catholicism with the modern world. Prior to Leo's papacy the Catholic Church, according to one historian, seemed to be involved in a "losing feud with the whole modern world intellectually, politically, and morally."²¹

Although he was as opposed to materialism and modernism as any of his predecessors, Leo XIII recognized his obligation to provide Christian alternatives, and not merely impediments to the contemporary views of the world.


He was the first pope to assert that democracy was as compatible with Christianity as any other form of civil government. He also affirmed that personal liberty "as distinct from sectarian liberalism, has its firmest base and surest prop in Catholic Christianity."\(^{22}\) Leo XIII also initiated new scholarly interest in Church philosophy and history by sponsoring study centers for neo-Thomistic philosophy and opening the Vatican archives for historical research. Affirming the Church's interest in science, he procured a staff of eminent physicists and purchased sophisticated scientific equipment for the Vatican observatory. Through his famous encyclical, "Rerum Novarum," Leo also injected Church thought into the class tensions of the later nineteenth century. Attempting to Christianize industrial society, he refuted the socialist assertion that class warfare was a natural phenomenon, and he reminded capitalists that it was "shameful to treat labor as chattels to make money by."\(^{23}\)

Both symbolically and actually Pope Leo XIII brought the Catholic Church into the modern world. The inspiration of Leo stimulated an intellectual rebirth in a

\(^{22}\)Ibid., pp. 143-144.  \(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 144.
rapidly stagnating European Catholicism. New Catholic social movements emerged throughout Europe. In these countries, Carlton Hayes has observed, "The Leonine [after Pope Leo] social movement gradually developed, with attendant Catholic trade unions and Catholic propaganda among urban and rural workers." Hayes also notes that because of this movement, "new energy was infused into Catholic ranks and the drift away from the Church was checked among the masses as well as the classes."24

Peter Maurin brought the spirit of this new intellectual and social Catholicism to America. In Europe the Leonine movement introduced a new dimension to Catholic thought, but the Catholic tradition of Europe enabled the alien idea to flourish. In secular America, however, the commingling of Catholicism with important social and intellectual issues was, at the least, a peculiar synthesis. When discussing his views with scholars or workers, Maurin attempted to lighten their complexity by lecturing in blank verse. Also, like the medieval troubadors, he found that this manner allowed for easier recall of his ideas. His analysis of the stock market crash seemed trite, yet it

24 Ibid., p. 145.
made the same point many economists had attempted to make:

After the World War
People tried to believe
that a new era
had dawned upon the world

People thought
that they had found a solution
to the problem
of mass distribution.

People thought
that the time had come
for a two car garage
a chicken in every pot
and a sign "To Let"
in front of every poor house.

And everybody wanted to cash in
on future prosperity.
So stock promoters got busy
and stocked people with stocks
till they got stuck.25

These "Easy Essays," as they were later called when
they appeared in the Catholic Worker, provided many catch
phrases for those who needed simple explanations. But for
those desiring careful investigations, Maurin included
sources in many of his speeches. His idea was to attract
as many as possible with his simple style and those who
wished to know more could read on their own. Included in
many of his talks were quotations from every important
Catholic thinker of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

25Maurin, Green Revolution, p. 113.
He frequently began a verse with "Kropotkin says . . ." or "According to R. H. Tawney," or "Emanuel Mounier wrote a book entitled the Personalist Manifesto . . . ." Taken together, these sources provided a synthesis which condemned modern bourgeois society as a dehumanizing structure motivated by the impersonal forces of material growth, disagreed with socialism for similar reasons, and proposed a plan of voluntary socialism based on personal freedom and communal responsibility.

Maurin derived much of his criticism of modern society from nineteenth century writers such as Chateaubriand, de Maistre, Carlyle, Dickens, Kingsley, and others of that genre who depict the disillusionment of the nineteenth century intellectual with rapid industrialization and the social convolutions it caused. Chateaubriand and de Maistre pre-date the industrialization of Europe, but their writing strikes a common theme with later social critics of the nineteenth century. In his most famous work, The Genius of Christianity, published in 1803, Chateaubriand praised the social relations of medieval Europe, contrasting them to the uncertainty and chaos of
post revolutionary France. According to one historian, de Maistre's arguments "made extensive use of the idea that the natural order of society is historical and traditional... take away the discipline imposed by church, monarchy, nobility, ... and the results will be disorder, corruption and decay." De Maistre called the new spirit of individualism a "disease resulting in social anarchy."27

The theme which Chateaubriand and de Maistre popularized was continued by the generation of social critics that followed them. Writers such as Carlyle, Dickens, and Kingsley in England and Lamennais, Sand, Victor Hugo, and Lamartine in France, also protested against the predominant nineteenth century ideas of Utilitarianism and economic liberalism. Their views represented a blending of Romanticism and social criticism that has been called "social


Romanticism." They criticized Utilitarianism which ran counter to their "deep sense of human dignity," and economic liberalism which they felt left the lower classes subject to exploitation. Thomas Carlyle felt that because of society's pre-occupation with economic liberalism, life was no longer concerned with "mutual helpfulness, but rather, cloaked under due laws of war named fair competition and so forth . . . life had become a mutual hostility." Maurin borrowed much of his criticism from this earlier group of writers who consistently sided with the working class on matters of social reform. These writers were, as one historian has noted, "by no means reactionary . . ." but rather they upheld the "ideal of a society that was aristocratic, not plutocratic, socially responsible, rather than irresponsible, opposing the social neglect of laissez-faire with a paternalism of the upper class."
Maurin did not mimic these social critics but he was influenced by their ideas. Although he would not agree with the idea of a "paternalism of the upper class" he would accept Carlyle's assertion that

religion is gone . . . absolute laws sanctioned by an eternal Heaven and an eternal Hell have become Moral Philosophies sanctioned by able computations of Profit and Loss, by weak considerations of Pleasure of Virtue and the Moral Sublime. ³²

When proposing alternatives to the society he criticized, Maurin leaned most heavily on Catholic thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the Frenchman Leon Bloy, Maurin borrowed the idea of voluntary poverty. Bloy himself suffered from the degradation of being poor, a degradation, his biographer notes, which could only have been realized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when men "drunk with material success and greedy for money and pleasures have bereft the poor of their human dignity." ³³ Bloy's major significance in intellectual history is that he anticipated and influenced a later generation of Catholic intellectuals who led the post-1914 Christian revival in Europe. Among those

³² Carlyle, Past and Present, p. 139.

influenced by Bloy were Jacques Maritain, the neo-Thomist, Nicholas Berdyaev, the Christian Existentialist, and Emmanuel Mounier, the French personalist who edited *L'Esprit*, the first Catholic journal of the intellectual left in France. Maurin's biographer, Arthur Sheehan, claims that it was Maurin who first introduced the writings of Bloy to this country. "Voluntary poverty," Bloy maintained, "was a luxury . . . St. Francis . . . was not a poor man. He was in need of nothing since he possessed his God and lived through his ecstasy outside the world of senses. He bathed in the gold of his shining rags." In an age that glorified individualism, yet at the same time groped for social solidarity, Bloy maintained that both elements existed in harmony within the Christian idea. He also concluded that a life of poverty was closest to the Christian ideal. "Poverty was nothing less," he declared,

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"than the spouse of the son of God." Peter Maurin probably viewed Bloy's theory of voluntary poverty as a sublime, and at the same time solidifying protest against bourgeois materialism. He accepted Bloy's contention that although destitution isolated men, "poverty binds them together." 38

Another Catholic thinker who influenced Maurin was Peter Kropotkin. From Kropotkin Maurin borrowed the idea that "workers should become scholars and scholars workers." 39 Troubled by the class polarization of the late nineteenth century, Kropotkin asserted that the best "solution for the workingman's disdain for the scholar was for the scholar not to shun manual labor but to engage in it." 40 Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Kropotkin pointed out that ever "since the great factory has been enthroned in the last hundred years the worker, depressed by the monotony of his work, invents no more." Formerly, Kropotkin stated, "Working men, not men of

38 Ibid., p. 175.
40 Sheehan, Peter Maurin, p. 70.
science had invented or brought to perfection . . . the mass of machinery which has revolutionized industry." 41 Kropotkin viewed a past in which worker and scholar were one, and he criticized the modern industrial system which bred atomization and discord. Maurin agreed with Kropotkin's analysis of the causes of alienation of the working class. Since the scholar has left the worker, Maurin concluded in an "easy essay":

...the worker is left without vision.
And the worker left by the scholar without vision
talks about liquidating both the bourgeois and the scholar.
The scholars must tell the workers what is wrong
with the things as they are.
The scholar must tell the workers how a path can be made
from things as they are to the things as they should be.
The scholars must collaborate with the workers......
The scholars must become workers so the workers may be scholars. 42

Another Catholic thinker whom Maurin read extensively was the French personalist, Emmanuel Mounier. In his book The Personalist Manifesto, Mounier wrote a chapter

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entitled, "Capitalism as Enemy of the Person." In it he states that "the economic organism underwent a sudden proliferation at the close of the eighteenth century and like a cancer it has eaten away the rest of the human organism." This "accident," as Mounier calls it, caused "the majority of thinkers and men of action to . . . proclaim the primacy of economics over history and regulate their actions according to this primacy." This juxtaposition, Mounier maintained, "tainted the whole organism of the person and society so thoroughly" that all forms of societal disorder can be traced to it.\(^{43}\)

Mounier believed that, by emphasizing economics, modern man had lost his sense of wholeness and had become solely an economic entity. The result of this diminution was corporate capitalism, the corporate state, and state socialism, all of which promised to fulfill man's economic desires yet diminished further his individual dignity. To counteract this drift in history Mounier proposed a philosophy which emphasized the spiritual and human qualities of man. He called his idea personalism. "More than a platitudinous motto broad enough to cover the political passions

of its varied participants," one historian has stated that personalism, ". . . was a term which conveyed the direction in which the majority of the membership thought speculative emphasis should be placed." In view of the depersonalizing nature of ideologies of the twentieth century, "Personalism, a defense of the human person, seemed the fundamental ideal for many intellectuals, many of them of the Catholic left." 44

The Personalists of France helped Christianize the rising tide of existentialism in Europe which also protested the rapid drift toward corporatism. Paraphrasing Mounier in an "easy essay," Maurin stated:

As an animal
man is an individual.
As a reasoning animal
man is a person.
The difference
between an individual
and a person
is the power of reasoning.
Through the use of reason
man becomes aware
of the existence of God.
Through the use of reason
man becomes aware of his rights
as well as his responsibilities.
Man's rights and responsibilities

come from God who made him a reasoning animal. 45

Although Maurin quoted many more writers, these thinkers taken together summarize the basic philosophy of Peter Maurin and likewise the Catholic Worker movement which eventually evolved from his ideas. First of all, like the early nineteenth century social romantics, Maurin had an awareness of the humanizing capabilities of history and tradition. This does not mean he created a romanticized or distorted view of the past. Rather, he looked to history in order to extract those virtues in man that remain timeless. As good art, moral achievement stands outside of time for all ages to observe. Carlyle, whom Maurin quoted, developed this idea with his "hero" image of history. Ernst Cassirer, in discounting Carlyle's responsibility for fascism, stated that "Carlyle's conception of the hero is very complicated, both in its meanings and in its historical suppositions." 46 Carlyle hoped his "heroes" would display the "whole man" as he should be. "The 'whole' of which Carlyle speaks," Cassier wrote, "is

45 Maurin, Green Revolution, p. 104.

not a metaphysical, but an individual whole. He is a classical witness to that philosophical attitude that was later styled existential philosophy." Maurin viewed the past in a similar manner. While Carlyle sought his hero, Maurin searched for the idealism that was manifested in the Roman Catholic community. For example, he discovered that

. . . during the early ages of Christianity the hospice (or the House of Hospitality) was a shelter for the sick, the poor, the orphans, the old, the traveler, and the needy of every kind. . . .

The fourteenth statute of the so-called Council of Carthage, held about 436, enjoins upon Bishops to have hospices in connection with their churches. 48

Once he had adopted this Catholic intellectual focus, Maurin leaned more heavily on Catholic thinkers for his final synthesis of thought. From Kropotkin he learned that worker alienation was not a natural phenomenon as Marx had theorized, but rather a result of the fairly recent atomization of society. This tendency could be reversed, he believed, by scholars living and learning with workers. In this manner workers might realize that they

47 Ibid., p. 197.

48 Maurin, Green Revolution, p. 5.
were not always a fragmented part of society, but rather intimate members. For instance, the lowliest worker in medieval Europe was aware of the significance of his labor when he helped construct a Cathedral. Or as Peter Maurin would say:

The Cathedral of Chartres is a real work of art because it is the real expression of the spirit of a united people.
The Cathedral was not built to increase the value of real estate.
The Cathedral of Chartres was not built with money borrowed from the money lender.
The Cathedral of Chartres was not built by workers working for wages.

The religious life of the people and the economic life ought to be one.

Finally from the Catholic thinkers in Europe, Maurin adopted the Personalist point of view. An idea, which, despite its modern coloration, was as old as Christianity itself. Its basic tenet was that neither mass movements, mass technology, nor science could redeem society. But rather society would improve only to the degree that each individual perfected himself. The model of perfection to which the Personalists adhered was Jesus Christ. As one historian has stated, the Catholic Worker idea of

redeeming society "began with man, for in the human person was the final individual entity that stood above process. This was the final level to which Christ had brought man." 50

Although complex and of diverse origins, the ideas which began the Catholic Worker movement come from a man of simple origins. Maurin was born in southern France, the child of religiously devout peasants. 51 Like others of similar background, he sought a religious vocation and joined the Christian Brothers, a group of men dedicated to teaching the poor. 52 This well ordered life which allowed him to realize his ambition to teach and study would have probably satisfied Maurin had he lived in another age. But he lived in a time when new forces were entering men's lives, the most imposing of which was the rising tide of nationalism. On November 14, 1898, the French government interrupted Maurin's religious vocation and called him into

50 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 6.


52 Sheehan, Peter Maurin, p. 54.
a year of military service. According to his brother, the contrast of life in the army with religious life had a profound effect on Maurin. From this time on, his brother recalled, "he held advanced ideas on social organization and pacifism." These new interests attracted him to an organization developing at this time around a journal entitled Le Sillon. A French reaction to the Leonine movement in Europe, this group represented the first mass movement in the French Christian Democratic tradition.

The Sillon was comprised of predominantly young middle class bourgeois who hoped to restore the waning influence of the Church in France by familiarizing the working class with the social teachings of the Church, especially the recent social encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII. Maurin had discovered this group while teaching in Paris, and he eventually resigned from the Christian Brothers to work full time with the Sillon movement. In the days around the turn of the century, Maurin frequented Paris'  

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53 Ibid., p. 55.  
54 Ibid., pp. 55-56.  
56 Ibid., p. 228.
Left Bank which was just beginning to attract the crowd that would characterize it in a few years. He walked the streets selling the Catholic journal and debating social issues with the intellectuals just beginning to settle in the area.

According to his biographer, Maurin soon became disillusioned with the intellectual vagaries of the movement, and it did not have a profound impact on his intellectual development. The Sillon, however, did influence the direction Maurin's life would take, for it instilled in the young man the idea that the Church's teachings were applicable to the problems of the modern world.58

Continual calls from the army, and a realization that he could not alter their inevitability, caused Maurin to abandon his homeland for the North American frontier. In 1909 along with 34,000 other Europeans, he travelled to Western Canada to set up a homestead. According to his biographer this migration began for him a "six year period of extreme personal hardship." His farming experiment ended

in failure and he travelled to the United States. There for the next few years he drifted, working odd jobs ranging from laborer for the Frick Coal Mining Company in Western Pennsylvania to janitor in a Chicago apartment house.\(^{59}\) These experiences gave Maurin a view of America which remained obscure to most natives, or more likely, ignored in an age that glorified wealth and material success. Unlike most of his fellow immigrants who readily embraced the American myth by accepting demeaning work for the promise of future wealth, Maurin questioned a system which to his mind denied the inherent dignity of the individual. In 1914 he settled in Chicago and supported himself as a French tutor. This occupation brought him a certain degree of financial security, but not satisfaction.\(^{60}\) During this time he began studying the history of the United States in order to obtain a better understanding of a society which he viewed as competitive to a destructive extent, moving toward greater chaos rather than order.

The American historian with whom he found the greatest affinity was Henry Adams.\(^{61}\) He agreed with Adams' \[^{59}\text{Sheehan, Peter Maurin, p. 67.}\] \[^{60}\text{Ibid.}\] \[^{61}\text{Maurin, Green Revolution, p. 14.}\]
proposal that it was man's struggle for unity which moved history. According to Adams, this desire had remained unfulfilled in the modern age of capitalism. The Civil War, the banks, the railroads, the corporations; all had promised greater unity but each had failed, causing greater friction and chaos. Maurin agreed with Adams' view of a past which found unity less elusive. In Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres, Adams presented the Cathedral not merely as an architectural structure but as an idea and that idea evoked unity.

Maurin, as a child in rural France, had caught a glimpse of the world to which Adams alluded. He felt he understood why Adams found the idea of unity more clearly expressed in the Middle Ages. Given the material condition of the world then, this idea of unity held a great attraction. It promised a world of harmony where men could live free from material want. In addition to promising a better future, the re-creation of this community on a more mundane level gave men a sense of obligation to one another and elevated the status of the individual regardless of his position since all men shared a common destiny.

It troubled Maurin that by the nineteenth century the promise of a worldly paradise overwhelmed the thought of heavenly riches, ushering in an era of competition over finite rewards. He felt that this desire for a worldly heaven would never fulfill man's desire for community since there would always be conflict over who would be the beneficiaries of the world's riches.63

Like the social critics of the nineteenth century, Maurin found a relation between the decline of Western thought and the rise of the acquisitive materialistic middle class. A man who substantiated Maurin's view of the bourgeois' role in history, and whom Maurin quoted in his "Easy Essays," was the Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev. Born in 1874 Berdyaev had the dubious distinction of being exiled both by the Czar and later by the Lenin dictatorship. As an exile in Paris in the twenties, Berdyaev was at the center of the religious revival among European intellectuals who were shocked by the Armageddon of 1914.64 Among his colleagues were Karl Barth, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, and Emil Brunner. Berdyaev's

63Maurin, Green Revolution, pp. 9, 12-13, 21-23.
64Stromberg, Intellectual History, p. 407.
spiritual inclinations however were not based solely on Faith. But rather he accepted spiritualism as an intellectual alternative to materialism. Berdyaev believed that because of materialism and the supremacy of the bourgeois, "History has failed, there is no such thing as material progress." In the modern era "the will to power, to well being, to wealth" had triumphed "over the will to holiness, to genius. The highest achievements belong to the past," Berdyaev wrote, "spirituality is on the wane and a time of spiritual decline is a time of bourgeois ascendancy. The . . . monk and the philosopher have been superceded by a new type, the greedy bourgeois conqueror, organizer, and trader." Concluding that a history without culture was meaningless, Berdyaev maintained that "in the new machine made, industrialist, capitalist civilization of Europe and America the spiritual culture of the old West based on a sacred symbolism and sacred tradition is being irrevocably annihilated."\textsuperscript{65} Untempered by "symbolism" or "sacred tradition" all that remained for modern man was an individualistic struggle for material gain. This pursuit had

destroyed the West's communal tradition, making virtues of competition and struggle.

Other radicals, especially Marxists, also understood the movement history had recently taken. They too hoped to end struggle and usher in a new era of community. They looked forward to a point in time when the bourgeois era would be ended by the final triumph of the dispossessed. But Maurin believed that the Marxists, by accepting the inevitability of conflict, had failed in their pursuit of community. What sense of community they did possess resulted from their common belief in struggle and persecution for their cause. Like the bourgeois, they too had a polarized sense of community which existed solely for the sake of conflict. Because of their views Marxists remained symptomatic of the world's problems, not corrective, promoting conflict rather than ending it.

Maurin felt that their failure was due to their view of history. Unlike the Marxists he did not see history progressing. He agreed with the nineteenth century Romantics such as Carlyle and de Maistre who felt that history could not progress since it had been driven off course.

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by the predominance of bourgeois ideals such as individual-
ism and competition.

Like a generation of thinkers before him, Maurin
believed that the Catholic Church remained the proper ve-
hicle for restoring history to its proper course. Although
in recent years the Church too had been overwhelmed by mid-
dle class aspirations, he felt that it nevertheless did
contain in its tradition a concept of community which
transcended nation, race, even time. He knew that, accord-
ing to Church doctrine, all men were linked spiritually to
one another, therefore if one member of this body suffered
from injustice, all did. This concept of the Church ele-
vated the significance of the individual by making each
person responsible for the welfare of every other person,
thereby denying the virtue of competition.67 He believed
that this emphasis on the person gave Church doctrine
added significance in the twentieth century, a time when
men tended to surrender their individuality to larger
forces which would explain and order their lives.68

To Maurin the social implications of these Church
doctrines were enormous. He believed that the only reason

67Ibid., pp. 104-110.  68Ibid.
the modern Catholic Church was not the dominant social force it once had been was because Catholic Scholars have failed to blow the dynamite of the Church.

Catholic Scholars have taken the dynamite of the Church, have wrapped it up in nice phraseology, placed it in hermetic containers, and sat on the lid.

It is about time to blow the lid off so the Church may again become the dominant social dynamic force.69

Maurin hoped he might succeed where other "Catholic Scholars" had failed. Through theology he hoped to work out a plan for social reconstruction. In the realm of thought his ideas were profound, in the practicality of every day life they were vague, and relied on a great deal of personal interpretation. For the immediate relief of displaced workers he proposed the establishment of houses of hospitality, where an unemployed or underpaid person might find a warm bed and a bowl of soup. He suggested these houses since they had been a traditional means of caring for the homeless throughout the history of the West.

69Maurin, Green Revolution, p. 104.
Monasteries had always kept hospitality rooms for travelers, and early Christians had always kept an extra place at the table for unexpected visitors. It troubled Maurin that the Church had disregarded this custom and had left it up to the state to perform these works of mercy.70

Another portion of his program stemmed from his disdain for scholars who had become "paid propagandists for bourgeois values."71 He called for "scholars to become workers" in order to introduce the worker to the richness of his culture. He borrowed this idea from Peter Kropotkin who explained that scholars would also benefit from closer association with workers. "How much better," Kropotkin asserted, "the historian and the sociologist would understand humanity if they knew it not in books alone, not in the few of its representatives but as a whole in its daily life, daily work, and daily affairs."72

The final part of Maurin's program also borrowed from the past. Reaching into the tradition of both American and European radicalism, he called for the establishment of farming communes. Maurin believed that it was

70 Ibid., pp. 5-6. 71 Ibid., pp. 46-47. 72 Kropotkin, Fields, Factories and Workshops, p. 406.
impossible "for any culture to be sound and healthy without a proper regard and proper respect for the soil." A product of the French peasantry, Maurin believed that Catholic philosophy had within it the best practical basis for communal agrarianism. Catholics "alone understand," he felt, "that while the family is the primary social unit the community comes next."74

There was nothing new in Maurin's proposals, many others had tried various parts of it at different times. What attracted people was that he offered it not as a new forward reaching program, but rather as one that looked to the past in order to reinstate values that had been lost in the speed up of time. In a world that had discovered chaos groping for the future, Maurin sought order in recreating the past.

Maurin's program also differed in that he did not call for a mass movement of crusaders, rather he hoped to attract individuals who in their own small way desired to alter the course history had taken. His followers did not anticipate a point in future time when their ideas would finally be embraced by everyone, that implied a belief in

73 Maurin, Green Revolution, p. 53. 74 Ibid.
progress in time, to Maurin an erroneous concept. For Maurin the future began immediately, simply by implementing his plan to the best of one's ability. This implied a personal approach to history one in which the individual remained dominant over things. This idea rebelled against the twentieth century world that had placed the objective over the subjective, subordinating the individual to the organization, to the movement, the party, or any other symbol that promised fulfillment. Maurin's program remained anarchistic, linking its followers only by an abstract belief in the human spirit and the culture which manifested it.

Maurin first tested his ideas while he worked as a French tutor in Chicago. Recording his early days in Chicago, Dorothy Day wrote, "He read constantly, he worked, he taught. Always he was the teacher... he wrote out his ideas in neat lettered script, duplicated it, distributed it himself on the street corners," and invited debate. In that comfortable era of the twenties Maurin discovered few sympathetic followers.

The closest his ideas ever came to becoming a mass

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movement was a few years later when he presented his program to Dorothy Day, a young journalist who had converted to Catholicism. In the late twenties Maurin had gone to New York to propagate his ideas. He frequented Union Square to preach to the radicals who assembled there. He also traveled to other places to spread his ideas. No audience was too small or too alien. In addition to debating with radicals he would also accept requests to speak to groups such as the Rotarians, or he would single out an individual who seemed sympathetic to his ideas, such as historian Carleton Hayes.

On one occasion his travels took him to the offices of *Commonweal* magazine. There he met the editor, George Shuster, and suggested that he transform his magazine into a radical Catholic journal. Not prepared for such a departure from reality, Shuster advised Maurin to approach Dorothy Day on the subject. He had published some of her articles in *Commonweal* and knew her concern for social issues.

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76 Ibid.

77 Miller, *Harsh and Dreadful Love*, p. 68. Hayes became a supporter of the Catholic Worker movement in New York after it began in 1933.

78 Ibid., p. 32.
In November, 1932, on returning home from the Washington hunger marches Dorothy Day found Peter Maurin waiting for her. She remembered him as a shabby looking man wearing a khaki shirt, stained pants, and an overcoat, the pockets of which were crammed with books and papers. "When he started looking for something he pulled glasses out of his pocket (glasses he had purchased along the bowery for thirty cents which magnified) and perched them halfway down his nose." 79 She listened while he discussed his ideas on Catholic social thought, and she concurred with his proposal that a periodical should be published embracing these ideas.

Unlike other Catholic intellectuals at the time Miss Day's background lent support to this kind of endeavor. In her younger days as a reporter for the New York Call and later as a staff member of the Liberator she had developed a commitment to social change. Malcolm Cowley remembered her during the years near the end of the First World War, and recalled that "no one had more compassion for the downtrodden than she." 80 Floyd Dell in his autobiography


described her as that "... charming young enthusiast with beautiful slanting eyes." She along with her friends took the inevitability of the revolution for granted, they "... watched its progress; ... were thrilled by its victories." She lived in a world "... where dreams came true, where there was a possibility of the workers beginning to take over the means of production and starting to build that kind of society where each received according to his need and worked according to his ability." Although she joined pickets and went to jail, she never led the life of an austere revolutionary. She enjoyed her friends and the camaraderie which a shared vision evoked. She remembered "hanging around Provincetown Playhouse where Eugene O'Neill and others of my friends had plays in rehearsal." After rehearsals they would all meet in the back room of a saloon on Fourth Street and Sixth Avenue, nicknamed 'Hell Hole' by its customers. "Here Eugene O'Neill, Terry Karlin, an old Irish anarchist who had known the Haymarket Martyrs, ... Mike Gold, and others were my constant companions." Often they sat on the


ends of piers singing revolutionary songs in the star lit night, "... dallying on the park benches never wanting to go home .... In love with all mankind, they took back to their apartments men found sleeping on park benches and gave them whatever bed was empty."\(^8^3\)

In addition to her social conscience there remained a strong spiritual sense which had always been fundamental to her personality and eventually dominated it. Ever since she had been a child she remembered "... being afraid of God, of death, of eternity ... afraid of nothingness. ..."\(^8^4\) These feelings remained with her into adulthood and as a result she abandoned her friends, her lover, and what they called her rational impulses, and sought solace within the Catholic Church. She found spiritual contentment here but her social conscience remained troubled. The very winter she joined the Church she had been working with the Anti-Imperialist League, a Communist affiliate, but her recent conversion meant she had joined the side of the enemy. As she admitted, her newly discovered repose was "... lined up with property, with the wealthy, with the state, ...

\(^8^3\)Ibid., p. 84.

\(^8^4\)Miller, *Harsh and Dreadful Love*, p. 37.
with capitalism, with all the forces of reaction."\(^{85}\) Her inability to find complete tranquility within the Church had been particularly disturbing to her while attending the Hunger Marches in Washington. Feelings of alienation overcame her. The Communist organizers of the march had once been her friends and together they had rebelled against injustice. She was still anti-capitalist but her newfound Faith forbade her to associate with her former comrades just as their beliefs caused them to reject her. What troubled her more, however, was the apparent rejection of the poor by her Church. She felt compelled to agree with Bakunin who described Christianity as "the religion par excellence, because it exhibits and manifests, to the fullest extent, the very nature and essence of every religious system, which is the impoverishment, enslavement, and annihilation of humanity for the benefit of divinity."\(^{86}\)

Peter Maurin's interpretation of the Church's function in the world with its emphasis on community and mutual obligations filled the void which Dorothy Day had felt. She was ready to plunge herself into Maurin's work

\(^{85}\)Day, Long Loneliness, p. 119.

\(^{86}\)Ibid., p. 172.
immediately, but he hesitated. First, he felt she must have a Catholic education and background. After their initial meeting she recalled that he visited often, bringing with him "books, papers and digests and articles which he either read aloud to me or left with me to read." During this time she had been working on some magazine articles so she visited the library daily. When she arrived home there was Maurin waiting for her, "... waiting to indoctrinate me," as she described it. "He stayed until ten when I insisted that he had to go home. He followed me around the house indoctrinating. If we were getting supper, washing dishes, or ironing clothes, it did not matter he continued his conversations."87

Throughout the winter of 1933 Miss Day planned her new Catholic journal, and finally on May first, with funds she should have used for the rent and utilities, she published The Catholic Worker.88 Along with some students she took the paper down to Union Square to distribute. Fifty thousand people were gathered there that day for the traditional workers' day celebration. It was perfectly logical,


88Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 65.
yet exceedingly courageous to distribute the new Catholic publication there. They were ridiculed to such an extent that all but one of her volunteers departed, leaving her alone with Joe Bennet, "a tall gangling young man who occasionally had to sit down because of exhaustion that came from a heart damaged by rheumatic fever." Together they instituted a new experiment in Catholic social reform.

The first editorial was addressed to those "who are sitting on benches, huddling in shelters, walking the streets . . . ." It told them that the Catholic Church had a social program and the Church stood with them on matters of social justice. In addition to Peter Maurin's essays, the paper included articles on racial justice, the plight of sharecroppers in the south, child labor, and wage controversy in the factories. Quoting the papal encyclicals "Rerum Novarum" and "Quadragesimo Anno," they attempted to emphasize the Church's condemnation of the injustices of capitalism.

This seemed a curious position for a Catholic journal to take. Ever since John Carroll began to defend his


90Catholic Worker (New York), May, 1933,
co-religionists in the late eighteenth century, American Catholic journalists had attempted to convince skeptics that the basic elements of Americanism and Catholicism were compatible. Now the Catholic Worker was quoting authorities no less than the Pope to condemn one of the most basic elements of Americanism, liberal capitalism.

From its outset the Catholic Worker became the intellectual focal point of the Catholic left in this country. The fact that such a movement had to be instituted by an immigrant and a convert was a symptom of the history of the American Catholic Church. But the Catholic Worker's peculiar combination of theology and social commitment comprised exactly what a new generation of Catholics were seeking. An early civil rights worker in Chicago supported the movement in Chicago from its beginning, because, as he explained, "... someone was enlisting the Catholic Church on my side, where I believed it should have been all along."91 One writer has pointed out that "a curious social paradox was involved in the rise of the Catholic Worker movement." Historically the Catholic Church had

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91 Interview with Arthur Falls, founder of the Chicago Catholic Worker Movement, June 19, 1976, Western Springs, Illinois.
been primarily restricted to the lower classes. By the thirties, however, Catholic immigrants were sending their children and grandchildren to college and Catholicism began producing "... middle class intellectuals as full of reforming zeal as their Protestant counterparts."92 "This new class of Catholics," another historian suggests, "... were not content to merely follow clerical leadership. They sought a more vital church, one which would actively participate in the reconstruction of the social, political, and economic structure of their country."93

This new generation found the promise for such a Church in the Catholic Worker. The enthusiasm created by the publication of this paper caused the formation of Catholic Worker study clubs across the nation and eventually the establishment of Catholic Worker houses of hospitality and farming communes in every area of the country prior to World War II. Each of these groups in its own way contributed to the history of the movement.

The Catholic Worker group which emerged in Chicago


93 O'Brien, Catholics and Social Reform, p. 192.
became one of the most significant of those in the pre-war era. Before the war wielded its divisive force, the Chicago group opened a number of houses of hospitality, organized a farming commune experiment, pioneered in race relations within the Church, and published a newspaper which Dorothy Day complimented, "... far exceeded our own poor effort." 94

The Catholic Worker movement still exists in Chicago and it remains a place where people live in community carrying out their personalist commitment. But in terms of impact this present group does not match the movement of the late thirties. The comparison, however, is not a fair one. The present Catholic Worker group lives in a far different universe. They have experienced the world Peter Maurin feared was approaching. Bourgeois mentality has encompassed even those groups which once attacked it most viciously. The Russian revolution has become the self-serving Russian bureaucracy, and the liberation movements in this country have become little more than pleas for economic freedom.

The bourgeois idea has become predominant and all

94 Chicago Catholic Worker, October, 1938.
that remains for the present Catholic Worker group is to live their personal revolution quietly protesting what they interpret as the madness surrounding them. The Catholic Workers of the thirties viewed a different world, one grooping for change and seeking direction. As a member of that group recently recalled, "It seems long ago and far away. We had a great deal of confidence that we could change the world. The world has changed but this is not what we anticipated." In those early days of the movement when dreams remained possible, the Catholic Workers provided an environment in which aspirations could become reality. Out of these surroundings emerged some of the most influential minds in the American Catholic Church. As Ed Marciniak asserted, and many others would concur, "The first outlines of my desires and aspirations for my manhood came to me during my early days with the Catholic Worker." 

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95 Catherine Reser to author, April 22, 1976.
96 Undated unaddressed letter in Ed Marciniak papers from file marked "early forties."
CHAPTER II

THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT IN CHICAGO

In addition to being the result of an idea, the Catholic Worker movement was a product of the times. Never before in the history of this country had so many people been willing to accept new ideas or formulas which promised to create a more humane world. At the forefront of these would-be architects were thousands of unemployed college students who had taken advantage of the cheap tuition at state universities in order to improve their lives. Upon graduating, these students discovered that the high paying white collar jobs they had hoped to secure were no longer available to them. Rejected by the status quo, these disillusioned students swelled the ranks of the Communist party, as well as other movements which promised to harmonize a much distorted world.

This surplus of unemployed students also caused the Catholic Worker movement to expand rapidly in the mid thirties. Peter Maurin's idea that "scholars should become workers so that workers might become scholars" appealed to
many idle students.¹ One professor who was an unemployed college graduate at the time recalled that this "principle of action struck the imagination of a great number of the unemployed college graduates who came to hear him [Maurin]."² These graduates who had felt removed from society once again had purpose. By accepting the idea of "detachment from material things, or voluntary poverty . . . , and living among the common people . . . ," they hoped to "influence the masses who spent all their time in enslaving work and meaningless activity."³ It was this group of young people, Dorothy Day later asserted, "which really began building up the Worker." Due to the influx of students, she recalled "before we were many years old, we had thirty-two houses around the country."⁴

The Chicago Catholic Worker was a result of this aggregation of frustrated but enthusiastic students. Although it did not become an organized movement until 1936, the Catholic Worker in Chicago had an avid though fragmented

²Ibid.
³Ibid.
following from its beginning in 1933. People discovered the movement in various ways. John Cogley first learned about it by finding a Catholic Worker paper crumpled up in a church pew one Sunday. He recalled "being startled by the down to earth writing and simple woodcuts scattered through the eight pages by Ade Buthune." Her art work "had life and strength" and her representation of the saints impressed him. She depicted them "sweeping floors or mending pots, not simply standing around in spiritual idleness."\(^5\)

Others discovered the movement in a more formal manner. Father John Hayes, a teacher at the time at Quigley Preparatory School, distributed copies of the Catholic Worker to his students in order to provoke discussion on issues involving social justice. Hayes had become impressed with Dorothy Day's simple devotion "to Christian principles and her willingness to live according to them."\(^6\) Hayes, who became an important figure in the labor movement of the late thirties, admired "Dorothy Day's forthrightness in attacking problems of the depression as few


\(^6\)Interview with Monsignor John Hayes, Chicago, Ill., June 14, 1976.
Catholic leaders had previously done."\(^7\)

In spite of the enthusiasm for the movement in Chicago, prior to 1936, it remained unorganized. Until that year, followers of the Catholic Worker supported the movement by reading the paper and sending donations to the house in New York. After June, 1936, however, they had their own house and soon their own paper. The original impetus for this movement came from a visit by Peter Maurin to Chicago in the early summer. He spoke at St. Ignatius High School auditorium as well as at other Catholic assembly halls throughout the city, promoting his ideas on Catholic radicalism and advocating the formation of a Catholic Worker house of hospitality. "We need houses of hospitality" he said in his lyrical style, in order to "give the rich the opportunity to serve the poor ... .

We need Houses of Hospitality
   to bring the Bishops to the people
   and the people to the Bishops
We need Houses of Hospitality
   to bring back to institutions
   the techniques of institutions,
We need Houses of Hospitality
   to show what idealism looks like
   when it is practiced.

"We need parish homes," he chided, "as well as parish

\(^7\)Ibid.
domes."\(^8\) Never asking for donations he rarely received them. He left the problems of necessities to providence. For this reason he spent some nights sleeping on a bench at the Greyhound bus terminal and another in a room reserved for bishops and other visiting dignitaries at St. Ignatius Church.\(^9\)

Shortly after Maurin's visit, an article appeared in the New York Catholic Worker calling for the formation of a Catholic Worker group in Chicago. This invitation came from Arthur Falls who had introduced a new column in the paper that month entitled "Chicago Letter." Taking advantage of the enthusiasm generated by Maurin's recent visit, he reported that "there had been an increase in student protest to the barring of Negroes from Catholic schools." This "healthy awakening" Falls commented, "was due in no small part to the increasing circulation of the Catholic Worker and the appearance of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in the area." In the same article Falls called for the organization of a Catholic Worker group in Chicago,

\(^8\)Peter Maurin, Green Revolution (Chicago: Catholic Worker Press, 1976), p. 4.

\(^9\)Hayes interview.
"not only to further interest in race relations, but in all other social and economic problems with which our Catholic people show an appalling lack of knowledge."\textsuperscript{10}

As chairman of the Human Relations Commission of the Urban League in Chicago, Falls had been a pioneer in the struggle for civil rights. The Catholic Worker had intrigued him from its inception. He was a Catholic, but until the Worker appeared he had never seen a paper with a Catholic title advocating racial harmony and condemning segregation and lynching in uncompromising terms. "In fact," he recently recalled, "Until the appearance of the Catholic Worker, my colleagues and I often considered the Catholic Church to be on the side of the enemy on race issues."\textsuperscript{11}

When he first discovered the Worker Falls wrote to its editor, and confessed that he "was struck with wonder" by the paper's content. "Certainly," he added, "those who have 'labored' with Catholics, both of the clergy and the laity in an effort to get them to face practical issues, are more than joyful to see your publication." He had one

\textsuperscript{10}New York Catholic Worker, June, 1936.

\textsuperscript{11}Interview with Arthur Falls, Western Springs, Ill., June 9, 1976.
suggestion for the paper, he felt it would be interesting to "see one of the workmen at the top of your page to be a colored workman." The Catholic Worker incorporated his idea and the masthead has remained unchanged since then.  

When Falls wrote in his first letter to Dorothy Day that he had "labored" among Catholics, he meant just that. For many years Falls had stood alone in Chicago as a Catholic advocate of racial justice. But with the appearance of the Catholic Worker he saw the opportunity of enlisting the vast powers of the Church on his side. For this reason Falls spearheaded the organization of this new movement in Chicago. He hoped to attract young people to the Catholic Worker meetings in order to indoctrinate them with the official position of the Church regarding racism as opposed to the view that was being perpetuated in many of their local parishes.  

This was a time when priests in predominantly white parishes would often refuse to administer the sacraments to Negroes advising them to go to their "own colored priests," and most of Chicago's Catholic schools 

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12 New York Catholic Worker, November, 1933.  
13 Falls interview.

Falls did not have a difficult time finding enthusiastic students. Although economically stagnant, the depression years remained intellectually fertile. Ed Marciniak, who would soon be drawn into the Catholic Worker group remembered these years as a time when "young people were alive, really alive." He and his friends "would read avidly, especially every learned Catholic magazine we could locate." They discussed current issues in hope that somehow by turning facts over and over again solutions would emerge. Sometimes these sessions went "on from Sunday afternoon to early Monday morning: one week Maritain, the next the steel strike . . . ." Early the next morning they returned to their homes, "exhausted, but tremendously stimulated."\footnote{Dan Herr, "Chicago Dynamo," Sign (September, 1962), p. 12.}

Not an exception, Marciniak's memories characterize an era when people attempted to grasp meaning in a world which in their lifetimes had shifted gears from horsecarts to airplanes. The ever increasing speed up of time had
become popular knowledge in the thirties, and if people could not slow the acceleration they at least wanted to determine direction. A group similar to the one Marciniak remembered gathered in a German community on the northwest side of the city. Marty Paul, a Lutheran who soon joined the Catholic Worker movement and then the Catholic Church, held these meetings in his father's grocery store. A salesman had talked him and his brother into purchasing a set of "Great Books." They took advantage of their indiscretion by inviting friends over for weekly discussions concerning ideas in the books. At one of these sessions, Al Reser, another future Catholic Worker, produced a copy of the movement's paper. Reser, a Catholic, had received the Catholic Worker from one of the priests at his school, and he was anxious to see his Lutheran friends' reaction to it. 16

Onto fecund groups such as Marciniak's and Paul's the invitation to start a Catholic Worker group in Chicago fell. When Marciniak first discovered the Catholic Worker he remembered that for him "a whole new world opened up . . . ." For the first time he saw "Catholics around

16Interview with Martin Paul, Boyne City, Michigan, June 17, 1976.
the country giving themselves to help the poor . . . , and right the wrongs of injustice."  

For these reasons Marciniak, as well as many others, enthusiastically joined Falls in the basement of St. Patrick's Church in late June, 1936 to organize the Chicago Catholic Worker movement. The personalities at the first meeting varied greatly, and not all shared the enthusiasm of the Pauls or the Resers or the Marciniaks in the group. Most attended because they were familiar with Dorothy Day and her work in New York, but others came simply because they noticed the word "Catholic" or "Worker." Consequently the group included one woman who after a quick inspection of the assembly left hastily exclaiming in a loud voice, "Just because I'm a Catholic doesn't mean I have to associate with Niggers!" Another person at the meeting used the occasion to explain to Catholic laborers the sins the Church had perpetrated against the working classes and that the Communist party remained their only refuge.  

Rather than being merely anecdotal, these incidents display a continual characteristic of the Worker movement. Since their idea was

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18Falls interview.
new to this country, many could never decipher their purpose. Throughout the thirties, forties, and fifties the Catholic Worker movement was attacked by the traditional left, as well as by the traditional right wing groups in the country.

Although most attended the first Catholic Worker meeting out of genuine interest for the movement, many probably came simply because free refreshments had been promised. Despite claims to the contrary which appeared regularly in the Tribune, economic problems continued to wrack Chicago as well as the rest of the nation. Even though George Young, president of the Chamber of Commerce promised in 1935 that the city could expect to "make great strides in the near future," the American Federation of Labor claimed in the spring of 1936 that across the nation eleven million people remained unemployed.

Wherever the truth lay between these two opposing views, it revealed a grim economic picture. Even if a man had been able to secure a job, the newspapers would not allow him to believe that the world was once again back in

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19 Chicago Tribune, January 5, 1935.
20 Ibid., June 9, 1936.
order. Gangsters still dominated Chicago's headlines as individuals attempted to secure a portion of the "good life" through illegitimate means. Lesser criminals also appeared in the paper as they too attempted to escape the harsh reality of economic depression. In what became a frequent occurrence during the thirties, the Tribune reported the apprehension of a group of men stealing meat from an emergency relief center. One of those caught tried to explain his plight. "I am a minister," Percy Dumas told the police while tears ran down his face, "but I love meat and I don't get enough of it on relief. I was tempted by veal chops and fell," he confessed. 21

There were probably a number of people like Dumas at the first Catholic Worker meeting. They have always been an integral part of the movement, since their poverty remains the most obvious example of the injustice which the Catholic Worker protests. Would-be prophets from all over the city also came to the meeting, each with his own plan for the world's salvation. Although the first meeting remained a confusing spectacle, a commitment did emerge to

21 Ibid., January 18, 1936.
Thereafter every Sunday a number of individuals, led by Arthur Falls, maintained weekly Catholic Worker meetings. Except for the large crowd at the initial meeting, the group never numbered more than fifty people. But this small group, finally aware of their course, anxiously awaited their future.

Falls gave a running account of the group's progress in the Catholic Worker each month and in the October, 1936, issue he announced that the "Chicago Catholic Worker was looking for a house which will draw the man in the street as well as a place which can serve as a library and discussion center . . . ." On the Sunday before Thanksgiving in 1936, the Chicago Catholic Worker group opened a house in an abandoned store at 1841 West Taylor Street. "We truly started from the ground up," Falls reported in the Catholic Worker, "for we began with two chairs and a stove . . . ." Later, Father Hayes, one of their staunchest supporters from the beginning, brought them some chairs for their meetings which, Falls interjected, "enabled us to rise off the floor."

22 Catholic Worker (New York), Oct., 1936. 23 Ibid. 24 Ibid., December, 1936. 25 Ibid. 26 Ibid.
Although guided by a similar idea, each Catholic Worker house varies greatly. These differences occur because each house reflects the personality of those responsible for it. The original Catholic Worker house in New York fed the hungry and sheltered the homeless. This reflected the personality of Dorothy Day whose compassion for the poor had marked her career both before and after she had become a Catholic. The house in Chicago was not Dorothy Day's however. Falls had created it, and in the early days his ideas prevailed.

John Cogley, remembering those early days, described Falls as being more mature than the rest of them. "He was more than a decade older," Cogley later wrote, which added a great deal of stature to him among a group of twenty year olds. Although a black man, he made the group aware that he "could not be placed into the stereotype subservient Negro to which most whites were accustomed at the time." Rather, he was, as Cogley observed, "Remarkably sophisticated, almost patronizing to his inferiors." Falls came from an old Negro family in New Orleans which had produced a number of pioneering priests and nuns. Falls himself had

27Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 8.
chosen a medical career, and in addition had spearheaded the early civil rights movement in Chicago.28

Although equally as concerned for the downtrodden as Dorothy Day, he disagreed with her methods. He was never enthused with the idea of feeding and sheltering the poor. To him a far better goal would be to teach the poor to provide for themselves. Reflecting this view of self-help, the first Catholic Worker house in Chicago replaced the characteristic soupline with an information center which contained suggestions for utilizing meager resources to their fullest extent. They also coordinated a consumers' co-operative.

Reporting in the Catholic Worker, Falls boasted that the new Catholic Worker house had a fine library for the neighborhood's use. In it, he continued, "were publications dealing with co-ops, race relations, and similar topics."29 Under Falls' direction the new Catholic Worker house also organized a credit union, where the poor could secure low interest loans and also save at the rate of five

28Falls interview.

29Catholic Worker (New York), December, 1936.
cents a week. The credit union lasted until 1948 when it could no longer endure the burden of an over-generous treasurer who granted loans to people who certainly deserved charity but not credit.

At first the Taylor Street house was a loosely organized affair run by volunteers from the local high schools and colleges. The central event in the first months was the Sunday forum. Eventually these meetings became important community events as leading scholars sympathetic to the Catholic Worker movement volunteered to speak when they were in Chicago. Eager to spread their ideas, young Catholic Workers distributed pamphlets throughout the city announcing these forums. Visitors from the University of Chicago, Northwestern, Loyola, and other schools as well as people from Bughouse Square, Chicago's version of Union Square, would descend upon the Taylor Street house as these

30 Pamphlets, accounting records, Falls private papers.

31 Every member of the Credit Union was reimbursed by Arthur Falls. Falls interview.

forums gained a reputation for being lively centers of discussion.33

In addition to Jacques Maritain, who was leading a Thomistic revival at the University of Chicago at the time, other guest lecturers included the Catholic sociologist Paul Hanly Furfey, and the Benedictine Liturgist Virgil Michel. Both these men had an important intellectual influence on the Worker movement.

Furfey, at that time, was one of the leading critics of a group of sociologists who called themselves scientific naturalists. Their hypothesis, that man could create a mechanized yet humanistic society, was being proved wrong, Furfey claimed, in the laboratory of Europe.34 As an alternative Furfey proposed a personalist sociology. He asserted that the human community could not be improved by external manipulation, but only by individual personal commitments. It was the enlightened person's duty not to compel, but rather to personally exemplify action that would produce a more humanistic society.35

33Ibid.


35Ibid.
introduction to his book on this subject, *Fire on Earth*, Furfey stated that the best example of personalism in action in America was the Catholic Worker movement.\textsuperscript{36}

Virgil Michel, the Benedictine philosopher, also spoke frequently at the Catholic Worker house and made great contributions to their thoughts. Michel, an early advocate of liturgical reform, felt that if the average Catholic had a closer contact with the external symbols of his religion, he would "see his intimate connection with all the creatures of the earth and his responsibility to them."\textsuperscript{37} Michel's ideas occupied a fundamental position in Catholic Worker thought and Michel himself saw in the Catholic Worker movement the "promise for a more gentle world."\textsuperscript{38}

These forums were not limited to Catholic speakers, one Sunday the meeting was addressed by a young automobile worker from Detroit who had recently spent some time on an assembly line in Russia. The man's name was Walter

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37}Virgil Michel, "Personality and Liturgy," *Oratre Fratres* 13 (February 19, 1938):156.

\textsuperscript{38}Chicago *Catholic Worker*, January, 1941.
Reuther. 39 These seminars, which attracted zealots from the entire city often created heated discussion and passionate rebuttal. For many young Catholics it was a strange yet exciting experience. For the first time they considered their faith as radical. Previously their religion had served as a source of comfort not confrontation.

These Sunday meetings also attracted their share of characters, a trademark of every Catholic Worker house. One who frequented the meetings on Taylor Street was Joe Diggles who, much to the chagrin of good Catholics in the audience, declared that he was a devout Catholic and at the same time a card carrying Communist. He also made this statement at meetings with Communists. Eventually Diggles was expelled from the Communist Party, not for his error regarding Catholicism, but for supporting traitors to the working class, the unions that went on strike during the Second World War. 40

Another apparent "character" who visited the Catholic Worker house and eventually dominated the house on

39 Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 10.
40 Sullivan interview; Hayes interview.
Taylor Street until his death in 1956, was John Bowers. He entered a Catholic Worker meeting one Sunday attired in fancy clothes and adorned with a walking cane, kid gloves, and a diamond stud tie pin. After listening to a speaker extol the virtues of the "people" for over an hour, Bowers finally rose, and in his piercing voice exclaimed, "Given the chance, the masses will make asses of themselves!"41

Bowers, who frequently could be found debating with radicals in Bughouse Square, did not look or act the part of an advocate of social justice. With his well manicured mustache, Italian cigarrillo which he clenched between his teeth, and overcoat which he wore draped over his shoulders, he looked more like a con-man than anything else.42 He soon became a regular around the house and would thrill younger members with stories from his limitless imagination. He told them he knew Mae West personally, also the Barrymores, but he was not speaking to Lionel due to a recent argument. Just before Dorothy Day made her first visit to the Taylor Street house Bowers revealed that he

41 Sullivan interview.

42 Interview with James O'Gara, New York City, June 20, 1976.
had known Miss Day from her Greenwich Village days, and he too was a close friend of Ernest Hemingway, Gene O'Neill, and Scott Fitzgerald. But the faith of his most avid believers was shaken when Dorothy Day arrived and her physical appearance in no way resembled Bower's description.43

The quick tongue which announced his arrival at the Catholic Worker house soon became his trademark. When Dorothy Day once suggested to him that it seemed a little incongruous that he sported fancy clothes and fine jewelry while working with the poor, Bowers responded in the words of Diamond Jim Brady, "Them that has 'em wears 'em."

Another time when he overheard someone praising the work of Baroness de Hueck, he informed the admirers of the woman that she "was no baroness at all" but rather a "Polack from Brooklyn!" His lack of respect for the woman who had done such courageous work in the area of racial justice probably left the group stunned.44

In addition to his biting remarks, the mystery of Bowers' source of income added another dimension to his mystique. When he first began to visit the house he had a

43Sullivan interview.

44Ibid.
gentleman's job walking around Marshall Field's catering to the whims of the rich clientele. But the salary from this job could hardly pay for his expensive Hyde Park apartment or his fancy attire. Those closest to him could only guess from hints that he lived off a moderate family inheritance.45

Soon he gave up his worldly comforts, moved into the Catholic Worker house and took over the administration of it. Until Bowers' arrival the house was only a part-time enterprise, since no one had the time to live there and give it a sense of permanency. Bowers' arrival changed that, and after he moved in the house became more available to the community.

It is difficult to ascertain what motivated a man like Bowers to undertake such a project. Father John Hayes, an early supporter of the Taylor Street house, surmised that Bowers at middle age had found his life lacking and the Catholic Worker filled the void.45 His closest friend at the Worker, Tom Sullivan, described him as "one of the most impressive people I have met in or outside of the Catholic Worker." Sullivan felt that Bowers, who he

45Hayes interview. 46Sullivan interview.
described as "a scholarly type," had made "tremendous strides in the life of the spirit." Regardless of his motivation, there was more to Bowers than an initial confrontation with his quick tongue revealed. He remained at the Catholic Worker house, eventually shedding his fancy attire for the more ragged clothing characteristic of those who knocked on his door every day. Taylor Street was his final home and Bowers soon became one of the minor heroes of the Catholic Worker Movement.

Bowers' harsh exterior and his barrage of sarcasm from which everyone suffered made it difficult to understand what attracted him to the Worker movement. One hint that his exterior overshadowed a more benevolent character was the affection he had for the children in the Taylor Street neighborhood. Soon after moving into the house he began a day care center where he organized projects for neighborhood children. Also, under Bowers' direction, Catholic high school and college girls held classes on Saturday at the Taylor Street house. In addition to tutoring school work, the girls held sewing, cooking, and drawing classes. Bowers

47 Ibid.

48 Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1938.
also collected and contributed funds of his own to pay the tuition for black children to attend the previously all white St. Ignatius school. Bowers had instigated his own integration program and his tutoring sessions were designed to assure its success.49

Another of Bowers' projects was the Maritain supper club. This "club" allowed Bowers to perform two of his favorite activities: cook and lecture. These meetings took place every Monday night. Bowers cooked an exotic meal with food that he purchased from one of the many ethnic grocers in the neighborhood. He only charged twenty-five cents for these meals and they were usually good, but those who came had to remain silent while Bowers read from the works of Jacques Maritain while everyone ate. After the meal there was the obligatory discussion session on Maritain. Rather than being discussions, however, they were usually lectures delivered by Bowers.50

49One of the reasons Blacks were omitted from the school was the assertion that they were inferior to the White students. Bowers took great pains tutoring the children to make sure that excuse could no longer be used. Tom Sullivan interview, Rockville Centre.

50Sullivan interview; O'Gara interview; Marciniak interview.
Word of the Maritain supper club reached the University of Chicago and a group of professors attended one evening at the request of a student. Everyone was glad to have the professors there since no one really understood Maritain and they always remained embarrassingly silent when Bowers called for questions. In the middle of the lecture one of the professors present raised a question regarding a point Bowers had made. Bowers feigned a cough, announced that he had a headache, and the lecture could not be continued. The professors caught the none too subtle hint and left the meeting. After their departure Bowers continued with his lecture after commenting that those who had just left had probably come only for a cheap meal.51

Bowers' personality eventually dominated the Taylor Street house, but during the first year of its existence it was still predominantly Arthur Falls' project. The most obvious sign of Falls' continued influence was the ever-recurring organizational meetings. Everyone belonged to a committee; there was one on education, which reported Bowers' success with local school children as well as

51Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 10.
experiences individual students had discussing segregation in their own schools. There were also committees on liturgy, labor, and cooperatives. Each committee Falls hoped would "carry out an active program in its particular field, spreading not only the sale of the paper, but also the philosophy of the Catholic Worker group." Falls felt that soon the Catholic Worker would "attain a place among the leading civic groups in the city."  

This stress on organization and growth was more a reflection of Falls' personality than Catholic Worker thought which had always remained decentralized if not anarchistic. John Cogley, one of the younger members of the group at the time, had been attracted to the Worker because of its philosophy of voluntary poverty and personal charity. With Falls' organizational approach Cogley felt nothing but frustration. "It finally turned out," Cogley later wrote, "we were running a kind of conference center with religious overtones." Soon, according to Cogley, aside from Bowers' work with the children, the Taylor Street

53 Ibid.
house was nothing more than a "place which sponsored forums or committee meetings five nights a week." 54

Cogley was not the only one displeased with the direction the house had taken. The personalist approach to injustice which seemed to many to be the basis of the Catholic Worker became lost in the entrapments of bureaucratic procedure. These young people had been attracted to the movement because they felt it to be in the intellectual vanguard. 55 They felt even more radical than the Communists whose faith in material progress seemed to the Catholic Workers to be a bourgeois concept. But now, for many who had joined the movement, the Chicago Catholic Worker, with its committees, forums, and growth plans, had taken on many of the characteristics of the bourgeois they abhorred. 56

Cogley and the other malcontents received some support for their ideas when Dorothy Day visited the Workers

54 Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 10.
55 O'Gara interview.

56 This conclusion, originally suggested by James O'Gara, was substantiated by Tom Sullivan, Ed Marciniak in interviews. Similar reactions are also found in John Cogley's autobiography, Canterbury Tales, p. 10.
in Chicago in the Spring of 1937. Cogley noticed that she was "obviously not pleased with the way things were going on Taylor Street." Even Falls agreed that "Dorothy never really agreed with my concept of the Catholic Worker," but, he maintained, "I thought it was the more realistic approach." Cogley felt that "there was really nothing wrong with the program and people did remain interested— but a bit of conventional social work among children and numerous committees among the group..." he was sure did not coincide with "Dorothy Day's idea of how the Catholic Worker should be running in the nation's second largest city." 

Dorothy Day was forty years old when she visited the Chicago Catholic Worker for the first time, and as Cogley remembered her she was "a strikingly attractive woman." Even though she had not "achieved the spiritual authority that marked her later years" Cogley felt that she was well on her way. He could not help but notice her effectiveness in "prodding young people to achieve greater

57 Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 17.
58 Falls interview.
59 Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 11.
heights in spiritual development combined with detachment and social concern."  

One of the most memorable nights in Cogley's young life was the evening he and Tom Sullivan dined with her at a cheap restaurant. "She told stories of her radical past for us," he remembered. "She told stories of her friendship with Rayna Prohme, Emma Goldman, Eugene O'Neil, John Reed, Carolyn Gordon, and practically every other social activist of the previous generation." He never forgot how "glamorous the whole evening seemed... and of course to us she was, too."  

Miss Day must have been impressed with the young Cogley also. Before she left town she asked him to accompany her to the bus station, and before departing, she gave him the keys to a house she had rented for the summer on Wabash Avenue. The house was located in the middle of a Negro ghetto and she suggested to Cogley that a Catholic Worker house there could supplement the work being done by Father Drescher at St. Elizabeth's parish.  

Cogley remembered that day as the greatest of his young life. "At last we were behaving as we were supposed

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60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., p. 12.
to, we were finally in the true Catholic Worker movement. It was great to be young and feel alive and be participating in something so vital."^62

His enthusiasm did not last long however. The first night at the house a knock on the door at three in the morning startled him from sleep. He looked out the window and saw a weary disheveled woman. His "first homeless guest" he thought, and opened the door to welcome her. As it turned out, the woman had just traveled a great distance to visit friends who had just moved from the house which Cogley now occupied. Since it was late, the woman did accept Cogley's offer to spend the night, but in the morning she departed in search of her re-located friends.^63

This incident became the first of many disappointments for Cogley at the house on Wabash Avenue. He soon realized that the pastor at St. Elizabeth's did not need his assistance. Unlike the many ponderous rectories Cogley had known this one's door was always open and there was always lunchmeat and bread on a table for anyone who wanted it. The priest ran a number of activities for the children and the families in the area knew they could always go to

^62 Ibid.  
^63 Ibid., p. 13.
the Church for emergency assistance. In addition, Father Drescher remained one of the few priests in the area who played an active role in the civil rights struggle in the thirties. Cogley soon realized that his Catholic Worker house was a "fifth wheel," and when the rent expired at the end of the summer so did the house. 64

In spite of his failure, a break from the Taylor Street house had been made, and the collapse of the Wabash Avenue house was but a preface to a more successful enterprise the following spring in 1938.

The split did not signal the end of the Taylor Street house; it merely meant that there were two Catholic Worker houses in Chicago. The Taylor Street house continued to prosper with Bowers' influence becoming increasingly prevalent. Under Bowers' direction the Taylor Street house became more like a child day care center than a Catholic Worker house in the New York model. Despite the departure, the house remained significant in the history of the Chicago Catholic Worker movement. For it was through the house on Taylor Street that many Chicagoans first discovered the Catholic Worker movement.

64 Ibid., p. 14.
CHAPTER III
CHARITY

After closing the Catholic Worker House on Wabash Avenue in August, 1937, John Cogley left for Ross, California where he joined the Dominican friars. But he remained there only a short time. On a cool morning in early December Tom Sullivan stood in Dearborn Street Station and met the train which brought his friend Cogley back from California. Having left the seminary himself, Sullivan did not press the issue with Cogley, but rather just offered him a place to stay for a while.¹

Back in Chicago, Cogley settled in a room at the YMCA on Wabash Avenue, but at the first sign that winter had subsided, he took to the road. The sight of unemployed young men wandering aimlessly along the highways and railways of the country had become a familiar sight by 1938, but Cogley did not belong to that legion of lost and

¹Tom Sullivan described this incident in an obituary he wrote on Cogley for the Catholic Worker (New York), June, 1976.
forlorn. There was a purpose to his journey, he had set his sights on the Catholic Worker House in New York City.\(^2\)

As a devout Moslem might travel to Mecca, a Jew to the Wailing Wall, or a Communist to Moscow, Cogley and others who had caught wind of the new radical Catholic movement in the thirties journeyed to Mott Street in New York City. At the Catholic Worker House there, a sense of camaraderie and purpose existed that emanates only from zealots certain of their cause. At the Worker house young people spent their days helping in the soupline or selling the Catholic Worker on the streets. New York's streets blossomed with idealists throughout the depression. Walking near Union Square one could hear hawkers screaming, "Read the Daily Worker!" and frequently a nearby salesman would retort, "Read the Catholic Worker daily!"\(^3\)

In the evenings the young Catholic Workers sat around their storefront home sipping coffee and discussing what they felt were important issues. The day's activities sapped their abundant energy, and the evenings restored it.


Years later Dorothy Day recalled, "Ah those early days, that early zeal, that early romance, that early companionableness, how strongly they all felt it." ⁴

By 1938 the depression once again overwhelmed those on the fringes, and the Catholic Worker again began to feel the strain of the unemployed. The house became so crowded that Cogley and a few of the other young men spent the entire night walking the streets of New York. They wandered through Central Park keeping themselves awake singing, talking, telling stories; anything to avoid sleep. At daybreak they returned to the Catholic Worker House where they met Dorothy Day on her way to mass. ⁵ "The Catholicism of the Catholic Worker went unquestioned," John Cogley later recalled, "the young people in the movement may have struck their fellow church members as too insistent on drawing out the full social implications of the Faith, but they were observant and devout." ⁶ Upon returning from Church the young men assisted at the breadline. When this work was completed, they would collapse, exhausted into one of


⁵ Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 18. ⁶ Ibid., p. 35.
the beds just vacated by its Bowery occupant. 7

Cogley enjoyed his stay in New York; it allowed
him to remain close to a movement he felt to be so vital.
But soon it became evident that his services could be bet-
ter utilized elsewhere. There was a surplus of people at
the New York house and when Cogley received an invitation,
along with busfare, to help with a new house back in Chi-
cago, Dorothy Day suggested that he go. Cogley was some-
what disappointed; he had wanted to remain in New York and
write for the paper, but he had never been asked. In June,
1938 he boarded a bus and returned to Chicago. 8

His destination was 868 Blue Island Avenue where Al
Reser and Ed Marciniak had started a new Catholic Worker
House at about the same time Cogley had left for New York. 9
This new house differed greatly from the one on Taylor

7 Ibid., p. 18. Also personal interview with Marty
Paul, Boyne City, Michigan, June 17, 1976.

8 In his memoirs, Cogley wrote, "My own inclination
was to stay where I was [New York], but everyone agreed
that I was needed in Chicago, and no one even suggested
that I was indispensable at Mott Street. Until the last
minute I secretly hoped someone would suggest that I might
write for the paper, but no one did. My journalistic call­
ing had not yet been recognized by anyone but Peter
Maurin." Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 22.

Street. Following the model of New York, it had abandoned committee meetings and forums and instituted a breadline and shelter.\textsuperscript{10} The building they occupied does not exist anymore. The area has become part of the University of Illinois Circle Campus. But in 1938 urban renewal remained far in the future, and the area was populated by poverty-stricken families of various nationalities.

The building which housed the Catholic Worker had been an old factory. The walls were brick and the floor was rough unfinished wood. On the first floor, small offices were located in two corners and on one side there were five steps which led up to a main floor. In this larger room they built a kitchen, and for a time allowed men to sleep on the floor there. Above that room there was another floor which served as the main sleeping area.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} Aside from an article which appeared in the Catholic Worker (New York), April, 1938, the first description of the new Worker house appeared in a news feature in the Chicago Sunday Times entitled "Charity on a Shoestring," January 29, 1939; information regarding house also obtained from personal interview with James O'Gara, New York City, June 22, 1976; also personal interview with Tom Sullivan, Rock Island, New York, June 24, 1976; and personal interview with Ed Marciniak, Chicago, Illinois, October 31, 1976.

\textsuperscript{11} Physical description of house from Marciniak interview.
Al Reser lived in the house and eventually his friend Marty Paul joined him. Marciniak lived there periodically and gave his time freely to the project. Marciniak also used his influence as president of CISCA to enlist groups of young Catholics into the project.\footnote{Marciniak was president of this group from 1938-1939.}

CISCA, an acronym for Chicago Inter Student Catholic Action, was a federation of Catholic students' groups in the Chicago area. In the thirties, under the direction of Father Martin Carrabine and Sister Cecilia Himbaugh, this organization became a center for Catholic social action. Carrabine, a Jesuit missionary priest, held meetings every Saturday morning. His discussions on democracy, social justice, and the Church attracted the attention of a number of Catholic students. Over four hundred young people usually attended these weekly seminars.\footnote{Personal interview with Sister Cecilia Himbaugh, Chicago, Illinois, October 16, 1976; also personal interview with Joan Smith O'Gara, who was Carrabine's personal secretary at CISCA, Rockville Center, New York, June 24, 1976.}

It was through this group that many young Catholics first discovered the Catholic Worker. Soon after the Worker movement had begun on Taylor Street, Father Carrabine
urged his students to lend their support. Arthur Falls reported CISCA's arrival in the Catholic Worker stating that "this group of young students is going to make Chicago Catholic Worker conscious to an amazing degree." 14

This group followed Marciniak to the new house on Blue Island Avenue and lent their support to its beginning. Without aid from student groups such as CISCA the house might never have blossomed, for it began with much hope and little else. Aware that "Dorothy Day had started the house on a shoestring in New York," Marciniak felt certain that "the thing could also be done in Chicago." 15

The building rented for thirty dollars a month, but Reser convinced the landlord to give it to them for fifteen. His bargaining did not stop there; he secured the first two months rent free in return for cleaning the building. 16 In the early spring of 1938 they occupied the building, which they christened St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. They soon reaped benefits from naming their

14 Catholic Worker (New York), October, 1936.
15 Chicago Sunday Times, January 29, 1939.
house after the patron saint of workers when they tackled the problem of obtaining food for their breadline.

Moneyless but enthusiastic they approached the local grocer who happened to be a devout Italian Catholic. When the boys gave their address as "St. Joseph House of Hospitality," Cherubino Iscabucci told them, "I give you credit, St. Joseph see you pay me (sic)." Although the payments often came late, the grocer continued his deliveries and devotion to the saint. On one occasion when the food bill was exceptionally long overdue, Cogley noticed the grocer gazing at their small statue of Saint Joseph. When questioned Iscabucci responded, "I'm asking St. Joseph to send you some money so I can get paid."

On Good Friday in 1938 the new Chicago Catholic Worker House opened its doors and a "... seemingly endless line of humanity shivering from the early morning frost, shuffled in for the initial breakfast of boiled oats, hot coffee and bread." In addition to the hundreds

17 Chicago Sunday Times, January 29, 1939.

18 Cogley reported the latter part of this incident in a story in the Chicago Catholic Worker, September, 1939, while making an appeal for donations.

19 Chicago Sunday Times, January 29, 1939.
they fed the first day, they also took in their first house guests. Within a short time they were feeding over three hundred and fifty men a day, and housing most of them.

The older men slept on cots donated by a group of nuns, and the younger men slept on the floor, grateful to be sheltered from the penetrating cold which blew in from Lake Michigan. "It was a bitter winter," Cogley recalled, "and the place was chock-full, men wedged in like cigarettes in a pack, it was heartbreaking," he later admitted, "to tell another hundred standing outside the door, shivering and pleading, that there was no more room and they would have to 'carry the banner' for the night."20

Before the Catholic Worker was a few months old the group became immersed in the relief crisis of the summer of 1938. The resurgence of the depression in 1937, and the refusal of the state legislature to recognize the reappearance of the problems of unemployment, had left the relief centers of Chicago completely depleted by the late spring of 1938. Beckoned by crisis, the legislature on June 2 "... held its most intensive field day on the

problem of relief in years." But the legislature, unprepared to solve the problem, excused themselves from it. They used the emergency hearings to produce "figures purporting to show that it could not afford to divert any more of the treasury surplus for relief." 

Mayor Edward Kelly and the anti-machine governor Henry Horner spent the entire month of June arguing the question of relief and responsibility. One compromise which emerged, much to the chagrin of the city merchants, was a revenue producing license on all public business establishments. This plan could not withstand the onslaught of lawyers representing the many chambers of commerce throughout the state. On June 14, the bill failed, businessmen sighed with relief, and thousands of unemployed remained locked out of the relief centers.

As the crisis worsened, the Catholic Workers on Blue Island Avenue became locked in a depression within a depression. Relief stations continued to close, or cut allowances, and St. Joseph House, along with other private charities girded its belt anticipating the worst. Public

21 Chicago Tribune, June 3, 1938.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., June 15, 1938.
funds became so limited that the assistant director of the Chicago Housing Authority discovered that "large dogs at the animal shelter received more per meal than a man on relief." 24

During this crisis the Catholic Worker House squeezed in over three hundred and fifty men every night. In addition they secured credit at a local hotel in order to lodge fifty more men. The next day they scrambled around the city, begging for money to pay the hotel so that their credit would be good for another evening. 25

In addition to sheltering victims of the relief crisis, the Workers in a small way attempted to attack the cause of the problem. Borrowing a technique from the Communists, they organized the men at the Worker house into the "Catholic Union of Unemployed." Marty Paul headed this group. They picketed the local relief office urging the director to re-open it. 26


25 Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1938.

26 Marty Paul interview; also in the Chicago Catholic Worker, June 1938, Paul reported: "The relief situation is not much improved, although the CUU protest to the local relief station influenced Mr. Lyons in his decision to resume shelter relief."
In July a recalcitrant legislature and a reluctant governor allowed Chicago to divert a portion of their income from gasoline tax into the depleted relief fund. In addition the governor discovered a surplus in the treasury which allowed him to deposit an additional 2.8 million dollars into the relief centers of Chicago.²⁷

In spite of the belated action, a month of suffering had occurred in the poor areas of the city and the young Catholic Workers discovered first hand the grim realities usually cloaked behind statistics. They found one man who had spent seven nights sleeping in damp alleys because the city was unable to renew his shelter ticket. They brought the shivering man into the Catholic Worker house and filled him with warm soup. When this did not alleviate his chills they rushed him to nearby Cook County Hospital, but they were too late and the man died from

²⁷Chicago Tribune, July 2, 1938. The change of policy came rapidly and without explanation. But in an interview with Studs Terkel one of the relief directors gave a possible reason: "I couldn't understand the sudden change of heart." Mike Sufro recalled, "[But] later I learned that shoplifting had become so great that the merchants petitioned the welfare people to give more monies so that shoplifting costs would go down." Terkel, Hard Times, p. 444.
Many others flocked to the house to avoid the certainty of death due to exposure. One man died there, and the stench of another almost drove everyone out of the house. The offensive odor came from a man's foot which was rotting from frostbite. A few years after the incident John Cogley still recalled "the stench of unwashed bodies, and filthy clothes . . . , eerie nightmares, and . . . shouts of troubled sleep." During the first few months he remembered that "the office was a constant bedlam during the day and a frightening scene of human tragedy and degradation at night."  

By the middle of July the newly allocated funds began to trickle into the public relief centers and the tardy summer weather finally arrived. As the burden lightened around the Catholic Worker House, new plans began to be implemented. First they planned to publish a paper which would express their ideas, report their activities, and most importantly, serve as a source of income. This idea took root mainly because of the arrival of John Cogley,

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28 Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1938.

whose plans to write for the New York Catholic Worker had been stifled.

The paper they published had a format identical to that of the New York Catholic Worker, the only difference being the word "Chicago" on the masthead. As with the original, the Chicago paper sold for a penny a copy. In spite of the similarities, they were quick to emphasize they were not competing with the New York paper. The first editorial stated, "If you have one quarter the cost of a yearly subscription remember, to Mott Street with it where Dorothy [Day] Peter [Maurin] and Bill [Callahan], and their gang are doing the best job of Catholic journalism in the country." But, it continued, "if you have two quarters take a chance on Blue Island Avenue, we shall do our best."30 They also reprinted a telegram from Dorothy Day in the first issue which encouraged them with a "Go ahead and God bless you!'"31

In addition to reporting daily occurrences around the house, and issuing appeals for funds, the Chicago Catholic Worker, edited by Cogley and Marciniak, contained

30 Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1938. Bound copies of the paper in Ed Marciniak's private papers.
31 Ibid.
articles on personalism, Church liturgy, art, and reviews of current movies and books. They also frequently dedicated entire pages to ideas on communal farming, and reports on labor strife. The varied and lively content of the paper boosted its subscription from the original three thousand to over ten thousand and caused the editors to receive complimentary letters from leading literary figures such as Carl Sandburg. After reading the paper, Dorothy Day wrote in her own journal that the Chicagoans' work "far outshines our own poor effort."

By the summer of 1938 a pattern had begun to develop around the Catholic Worker House on Blue Island Avenue. The life of the young men revolved around feeding the poor, speaking to local groups, and publishing their paper. For relief from the drudgery they travelled. Cogley recalled that

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32 Ibid.

33 Reference to Sandburg letter was made in Cogley's memoirs which were seen in offices of Commonweal June 22, 1976. These memoirs have been published as Canterbury Tales: Experiences and Reflections, but some of the original material has been deleted.

34 Catholic Worker (New York), September, 1938. She repeated this comment recently in the Catholic Worker, May, 1976 when commenting on Cogley's death.
our relatives ... worried about us. They thought we were wasting our youth, but we could not imagine a better way to spend it. There was a great deal of hitchhiking from one Catholic Worker house to the other. Every now and then either Dorothy Day or Peter Maurin would drop by the Blue Island Avenue place. There was, of course, a great deal of traveling around the country on our part as well. There were about forty Catholic Worker groups running houses and communal farms from coast to coast and we occasionally visited them.

Visits to other Worker houses provided recreation and also reassurance. Many who groped for a sense of community in the uncertainty of the Depression found it in the sense of purpose the Catholic Worker gave them. Those across the nation who read the Chicago Catholic Worker could agree with Cogley when he wrote, "It may seem little and ineffective, this feeding and clothing and sheltering the homeless, but we must keep before us the vision of the world we are trying to make." Those who belonged to the Catholic Worker movement, he asserted, were "trying to create a new world built on love." He noted that in other lands many people were "being called upon to make great sacrifices in the name of hate," and "all we are doing is sacrificing a little in the name of love."³⁶

Knowing that others across the country held similar

³⁵Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 29.

³⁶Chicago Catholic Worker, March, 1940.
beliefs made it easier for the Catholic Workers to endure the frequent reprisals they suffered from many of their co-religionists. One afternoon a priest brought a group of high school students to the Catholic Worker house. No one recognized the cleric, but they were grateful to him for calling attention to their work. Grateful, that is, until they heard the priest tell his students, "Get a good look at this place, this is what a Communist front looks like, this is how the Reds are sneaking into the Church." 37

On another occasion, Sullivan and Cogley were invited to Holy Family rectory for dinner by their good friend Father Carrabine. During the meal they overheard a priest remark, "I'd rather be seen going into a brothel than into the Catholic Worker House." Sullivan, undaunted, did not let his Irish wit escape him as he retorted, "Well we should all go where we feel most comfortable." 38

Although the Catholic Workers were often accused of being Communists only Al Reser knew one well. 39 In the

37 Cogley memoirs; O'Gara interview.

38 Sullivan interview.

39 Letter, Catherine Reser to author, December 3, 1976. Mrs. Reser was referring to Joe Diggles (see Chapter II, p. 71). In a letter written to the Daily Worker, organ of the American Communist Party, Diggles told the
thirties, however, Catholic Worker activities did disturb many Catholics. Had they restricted their activities to merely feeding the hungry and housing the unemployed, without questioning the system that produced such inequities, they would have received citations from many of the same priests who called them Communists. But they felt compelled to go beyond mere acts of mercy. They hoped to carry their Church into a new dimension of social action which had been, heretofore, avoided. It was a fitting comment on the mind of the Church at that time that many priests thought the Catholic Workers were Communists because they dared to carry the message of their Church into the black ghettos, labor halls, and relief offices of the city. 40

One deficiency which the Catholic Workers hoped to

editors that although a Catholic, he was also a Communist, because he believed they had "the only real political program commensurate with the Christian concept of the equality of man." Daily Worker, November 12, 1936, cited in Ralph Roy, Communism and the Churches (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960), p. 133.

alter was their own Church's role in race relations. When blacks first moved to northern cities in great numbers the Catholic Church remained indifferent to them, and the Church's members, reflecting a tradition which preceded the Civil War, greeted them with outright hostility.\(^41\) When blacks first migrated to Chicago in large numbers around the turn of the century, the bishop gave them a parish of their own at Thirty Sixth and Dearborn Streets. He brought in a Negro priest from Peoria and left the Church to fend for itself.\(^42\)

Between 1915 and 1920 increased migration of black Catholics from Louisiana swelled their number in Chicago significantly. This rapid growth caused a great deal of anti-Negro sentiment among white Catholics, and in response to this feeling Archbishop George Mundelein "formulated a


\(^{42}\) Osborne, *Segregated Covenant*, p. 204.
policy that resulted in almost complete racial segregation within the Archdiocese of Chicago." 43 He made St. Eliza-
beth's Church at Forty-First and South Michigan Avenue an all Negro parish. Wary of his own priests' reaction, he invited a missionary priest into the diocese to tend to the needs of these black Catholics. 44

This parish was located within blocks of what was then described as the "heart of the black belt," Forty-Seventh and South Park Avenue. Here, it was said in the Thirties, if you were looking for a "certain Negro in Chi-
cago, stand on the corner of 47th and Park long enough and you're bound to see him." 45 One contemporary wrote, "There is continuous movement here, shoppers streaming in and out of stores . . ., irate tenants filing complaints . . ., [and] job seekers moving in and out of the United States unemployment office." In addition there were "tea pads, . . . reefer dens . . ., buffet flats and call houses

43 Alan Spear, Black Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 179; see also Osborne, Segregated Covenant, p. 204.


known only to the underworld and those respectable persons white and colored, without whose faithful support they could not exist." 46

In this neighborhood, Saint Elizabeth's grew and became the largest black Catholic parish in the country. 47 Parishes usually have geographic limits, but Saint Elizabeth's became the religious center for all Negro Catholics regardless of where they lived. If a black Catholic wanted to have his child baptized, his daughter married or his parents buried, it had to be done at Saint Elizabeth's. 48

By the mid-thirties, the population of black Catholics had expanded to the point where they comprised sizeable minorities within at least twenty parishes throughout the archdiocese of Chicago. 49 No longer able to restrict attendance to Saint Elizabeth's, Cardinal Mundelein allowed pastors of the churches involved to establish their

46 Ibid., p. 380.


48 Osborne, Segregated Covenant, p. 205.

own racial policies. Most of these priests, reflecting the prejudices of their parishioners, maintained a policy of segregation. Black Catholics were permitted to attend mass, but parish societies, clubs, and schools remained closed to them.

The prejudice displayed by Catholic Churches caused most civil rights leaders in the thirties to consider that institution to be one of the many obstacles which thwarted racial justice. They were quick to cite incidents such as the case of an old Negro woman who had been injured in an automobile accident and then refused admission into a nearby Catholic hospital because of her color. She was moved to a "colored hospital" where she died the next day and her doctor reported that she would probably have lived had she received immediate treatment.50 This incident remained one of many typical occurrences involving Negroes and Catholic institutions. Even Catholic schools denied the implications of the truths they taught. Aside from Loyola and De Paul, all Catholic schools remained segregated.51

Arthur Falls, who started the Catholic Worker in Chicago, found the condition of racial prejudice among his co-religionists deplorable. In his mind, the Church had set out in "unmistakable terms the foundations of justice and charity" and the duties of Christians toward their fellow man. He believed that no true Catholic could fail to be interested in race relations since even the word itself meant "universal . . . , all embracing . . . ." 52

Falls had been chairman of the Interracial Commission of the Chicago Urban League since 1932. 53 Being a Catholic, Falls was anxious to alter the prejudicial attitudes of the majority of his co-religionists, and in so doing, enlist the support of the Church for his cause. To realize this goal, he helped found the National Catholic Interracial Foundation in the spring of 1934. 54


53 Organized in 1919 after the race riot of that year, the Urban League had been considered by the white community as a "citadel of safe leadership." This opinion changed in the thirties however, throughout the depression the League gave its support to young radicals who were beginning to display discontent "in non-violent patterns of aggressive action." Drake and Clayton, Black Metropolis, p. 734.

54 Lammanna and Coakley, "The Catholic Church and the Negro," p. 156. Dorothy Day was vice president of this
also became an associate editor of the movement's publication, Interracial Review. From the beginning this group was "close to the mainstream of the civil rights movement," but it never made inroads into the white Catholic community, as Falls had hoped. The main accomplishment of the Interracial Review was that it served notice to other members of the Negro press that all Catholics were not racists. 55

It was not until Falls discovered and eventually established the Catholic Worker movement in Chicago that he had a means of confronting white Catholics with their prejudice. According to Falls, "The Catholic Worker proved to be the key with which the Negro Catholics were able to open the door of white Catholic churches in Chicago." 56

organization until the early forties when it became an all black movement. In the movement's publication, Day's name appears as vice president and Falls as associate editor.


Years later, John Cogley wrote about the Worker and its contribution to racial justice in the thirties. He stated that although "the Catholic Worker did not coin the phrase 'Black is beautiful,' it [the Worker movement] acted as if it knew it was. In hostels that grew up under its auspices," he recalled, "blacks and whites lived together easily and mingled freely, without self-consciousness or any note of do-goodism." 57

Cogley's first Catholic Worker house had been in the heart of the black ghetto, and now in the new house on Blue Island Avenue he, Marciniak, and others aligned themselves with Falls in his quest for racial justice. The first target was the schools. The Catholic Worker invited teachers to the house to take part in discussions on racial justice. Despite the official attitude of their schools, many of these teachers advocated integration. These meetings served both as a means of moral support and as instruction for teachers who shared ideas on presenting where few Catholics had been active was in dealing with the problems of the Negro." During this period "The Catholic Worker featured a white and a Negro worker arm in arm with Christ on its masthead and showed an early interest in interracial work." Pp. 202-203.

57 National Catholic Reporter, October 30, 1968.
logical arguments to the numerous reasons given for main-
taining segregation. 58

Teachers also sent students down to the Catholic Worker houses on Blue Island Avenue and Taylor Street. "We indoctrinated these students," Falls later recalled. Armed with papal pronouncements, and Church teachings, these stu-
dents would return to their classrooms and ask questions such as, "In the light of what the Pope has said regarding the right of every Catholic to have a Christian education, why has this school excluded Negroes?" 59 Many teachers sympathetic to the cause of civil rights avoided these topics in fear of reprisals from principals or parents, but were glad to discuss them when students initiated the discussion. 60 Very few Catholic schools were left

58 Falls interview; one historian has stated that the Catholic Worker houses served as "centers for the dis-
cussion of crucial moral, economic, social, and political problems." It was at these "unusual adult education centers that thousands of men and women were first intro-
duced to Catholic social action." In this article the author mentions the work done at the Chicago Catholic Worker where "Ed Marciniak, John Cogley, and James O'Gara called for involvement in the urban . . . environment where . . . the great problems of modern life had to be con-

59 Falls interview.  
60 Ibid.
untouched by this Catholic Worker propaganda. In this way a new generation of Catholics were discovering different attitudes toward race relations. 61

Falls also took some of the more interested students to meetings of the Urban League and other social action groups with which he was associated. Through Falls' invitation many young Catholics for the first time joined Chicago's urban reform movements. Until this time Catholics were expected to restrict their activities to Catholic groups. In the thirties, Falls was called a "bad Catholic" for sending Catholic families to public relief centers instead of to their local parish priest when confronted with eviction. 62

Association with the Catholic Worker also gave Falls the opportunity to present his views in a journal which attracted a predominantly white audience. Although he had been writing in the New York Catholic Worker since 1936, he rarely discussed the race issue. His column

61 For example, the priest who organized the Catholic Interracial Conference in Chicago, Daniel Cantwell, first became involved in social action as a member of the Chicago Catholic Worker while he was still in the seminary. Personal interview with Monsignor Daniel Cantwell, Chicago, Illinois, May 26, 1976.

62 Falls interview.
"Chicago Letter" dealt primarily with the progress of the Catholic Worker movement in Chicago. On one occasion, however, Dorothy Day turned over the entire front page of the Worker to an article written by Falls entitled, "Danger of Race Riots in Chicago's Slums." Describing the sordid conditions of Negro housing in Chicago, Falls accused the Chicago Housing Authority of working in collusion with neighborhood improvement associations to exclude Negroes.63 Long before the controversy arose in the fifties, Falls used his article in the Catholic Worker to reveal that the University of Chicago was "buying property from people who might rent or sell to Negroes in order to hold the line" against black families. He also pointed out that the University of Chicago "actively supported the segregation policies of Neighborhood Associations."64

63 Catholic Worker (New York), April, 1937. In local jargon, "neighborhood improvement associations" meant groups of whites who unite to keep their neighborhoods segregated, whereas "community councils" are groups which work to harmonize race relations in their community. Osborne, Segregated Covenant, p. 207.

64 In the mid fifties when the Hyde Park Kenwood Community Conference supported by the University of Chicago proposed a plan for urban renewal it was hailed by a majority of the liberal community in Chicago. The only formidable opposition came from a committee of Catholics headed by John Egan. The only journalist of any significance who supported Egan was Marciniak who edited Work at
Hopeful of the impact that a newspaper with a Catholic title would have on the City Council, Falls sent this edition of the Catholic Worker to the Mayor and to each member of the council. Along with the paper he sent a "strong plea for constructive efforts by the City Council to make possible equality of opportunity for Negroes in housing."65

When Marciniak and Cogley began their experiment in Catholic journalism, Falls saw it as another tool he could utilize in his quest for racial justice. He hoped to use his influence over the younger members of the group in order to transform the Chicago Catholic Worker into a paper which dealt primarily with the race issue from a Catholic that time. Marciniak and Egan opposed the program for the same reasons that blacks would oppose such programs ten years later when they would sarcastically refer to urban renewal as "urban removal." Marciniak and Egan pointed out that the University of Chicago plan would (1) lower the amount of housing in the neighborhood and (2) this reduced housing belonged primarily to Negroes and (3) plans to re-locate the displaced did not provide sufficient housing. For a favorable report of the Hyde Park project see Robert Dentler, The Politics of Urban Renewal (Glencoe: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961). For Marciniak's and Egan's re-sistance to the proposals see Rossi and Dentler, Urban Re-newal, pp. 225-39; see also Marciniak's private papers for texts of speeches opposing the proposal.

65Catholic Worker (New York), May, 1937.
point of view. But Cogley and Marciniak wanted their journal to be more eclectic. An emphasis on the race issue, they felt, would ignore the other significant ideas with which the Catholic Worker dealt. The editors did agree, however, to give Falls a monthly column in the paper. Falls accepted since he knew the Chicago Catholic Worker reached the exact group he wanted to influence. The majority of the ten thousand copies of the Chicago Catholic Worker were read by students, young college educated adults, and socially conscious priests. If there were to be a change in the Church he knew these groups would have to initiate it.

Falls addressed his articles to this particular audience. When the anti-lynching bill became filibustered in Congress, Falls urged readers to "throw their solid support—vocal, written, and actual behind the Gavagan-Fish anti-lynching bill." He reminded his Catholic readers that "13,000,000 exploited, discriminated, despised, black brethren of Christ are still calling out for fearless uncompromising Christians to set the pace and light the

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In other issues he continued his attack on housing discrimination. He warned Chicago readers not to compare their racial attitudes favorably against the South. Cities like Chicago have their own form of lynching, he reminded them, in the form of tuberculosis and rickets which resulted from "holding Negroes within rigid ghettos."68

Although the Archdiocese of Chicago would not have an approved Catholic Interracial Council until 1946, the Catholic Worker planted the seeds in January, 1938 when they established monthly hearings on interracial justice at St. Elizabeth's auditorium on South Michigan Boulevard.69

67Chicago Catholic Worker, January, 1940.

68Ibid., March, 1941.

69Catholic Worker (New York), February, 1938. Marciniak interview. Marciniak pointed out that these meetings were set up in the form of mock trials and they received a great deal of publicity and attracted large audiences. His assertion receives support in the Chicago Defender. In the January 8, 1938 issue of this Negro paper a large headline on page two announced: "Chicago Catholics to hold interracial meeting." The Defender described these meetings as another "one of the outstanding meetings held under Catholic Worker auspices." The Defender, apparently eager to encourage allies, praised with some exaggeration the work of the Chicago Catholic Workers stating that they were helping to make "Chicago a leading city in the promotion of racial harmony."
As most early interracial groups these meetings were designed for education rather than confrontation. But in the late fifties and early sixties when priests and nuns began wading with blacks into segregated beaches in Chicago, and picketing segregated Catholic clubs and hospitals, they traced their roots to the Chicago Catholic Worker movement. 70

Ed Marciniak who in the 1960's headed the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations began his struggle for racial equality with the Catholic Worker movement. He organized the inter-racial hearings at St. Elizabeth's and a few years later he was instrumental in founding the Catholic Inter-racial Council in Chicago. During these years the Chicago Catholic Worker as well as other civil rights groups restricted their appeals to conscience rather than force, but this activity helped plant the seeds for the more active period which followed.

Marciniak's work in the early civil rights struggle won him compliments from people such as the black poet,

70 For example, Monsignor Daniel Cantwell, who Osborne described as a leader in the civil rights movement in Chicago, and Ed Marciniak who served on the Catholic Interracial Conference and the Mayor's Commission for Human Relations.
Claude McKay. He told Marciniak, "I like you Ed because you are a natural," and "if you ever erred it would be on the side of right never on the wrong side." The poet felt certain that if Marciniak liked "a Negro you liked him as a person and not because you feel that you ought to mortify yourself to like one."\(^7\)

Supporting the struggle for racial justice seemed to the men on Blue Island Avenue to be a logical outlet for their Catholic Worker activity. It involved their religion in human relations, an area where it had been conspicuously absent. For similar reasons the Catholic Worker not only in Chicago, but across the country, became a major force of opposition against Father Charles Coughlin when his social justice crusade took on marks of anti-Semitism. According to David O'Brien, "The Catholic Worker always opposed the radio priest and took the lead in fighting anti-Semitism."\(^7\)

Ironically, Coughlin began his radio career defending his Faith against another group of demagogues, the Ku Klux Klan. He went on the radio in the mid-twenties to

\(^7\) McKay to Marciniak, March 5, 1945, Marciniak's private papers.

\(^7\) O'Brien, Catholic Social Reform, p. 173.
answer attacks that a local Klan group in Detroit had made against the Catholic Church. In those days he calmly attempted to appeal to reason. But in the decade that followed, his radio audience expanded, as did his ambition, and he graduated from sermons to politics, and finally to demagoguery. Although millions listened to the mellifluous voice of Coughlin in the thirties, his actual following remained small. Unfortunately, as John Cogley later pointed out, these Coughlinites became for many the typical urban Catholic immortalized in novels, plays, and short stories. Their significance also became magnified in non-fiction, as some historians in the mid-fifties began to view the Coughlin phenomenon as the missing link between Populism, which they described as home-grown fascism, and McCarthyism. Whether the Coughlinites deserved such distinction is doubtful, but certainly these extremists,

73 The best biography of Coughlin is Charles Tull, Father Coughlin and The New Deal (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965).


although a minority, were vocal enough, and their actions sufficiently violent to make Jews wonder if the tragedy their relatives were suffering in Europe would be repeated in America.

In the late thirties as Coughlin's remarks became more inflammatory, many early listeners turned away in disillusionment, but his audience was replenished by those of a more extreme nature. Most noticeable of the new groups eagerly absorbing Coughlin's accusations were a group of young toughs who called themselves the Christian Front. Corralling their hate under the banner of Christianity they waged a crusade of vengeance against Jews and Communists alike. They organized anti-Jewish boycotts carrying signs and distributing leaflets which urged people to "Think Christian, Act Christian," and "Buy Christian." They also organized gun clubs and practiced military techniques in preparation for the day when they would be required to

76 Cogley, Catholic America, p. 96. According to Marciniak, Coughlin unintentionally swelled the ranks of the Catholic Worker in those days when many who had been attracted to the priest because of his early stands on social issues became disenchanted with his anti-Semitism and other flights from reality after 1935. Marciniak interview, Chicago, October 31, 1976.
defend Christianity and Americanism with their lives. 77

Although the main strength of the movement remained in New York, its reverberations were felt throughout the country, reminding Jews of previous persecutions at the hands of Christians. 78 The Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, The American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Labor Committee waged a campaign of counter propaganda against this anti-Semitism, but the strongest Christian-based opposition to the radio priest and his followers came from the Catholic Worker movement. 79

In July, 1939 SocialJustice, Coughlin's newspaper, carried a headline announcing Christian Front plans to launch a full-scale membership drive in the city of Chicago.

77 Christian Front activities were exposed in a series of articles appearing in a paper entitled Voice. This paper was published as a Catholic response to anti-Semitism. See Chapter III, p. 126. Quotes taken from Voice, August, 1940.

78 Tull, Father Coughlin, pp. 207, 244; see also Cogley, Catholic America, pp. 96-97; also O'Brien, Catholic Social Reform, p. 157.

79 An example of Jewish counter-propaganda was Father Coughlin, His Facts and His Arguments published by the American Jewish Committee which was comprised of the B'nai B'rith, Jewish Labor Committee, and the American Jewish Congress. In a section of this book entitled "Catholic Response to Anti-Semitism," they quote the Catholic Worker extensively.
But as the *Chicago Catholic Worker* reported in January, 1940 "the movement never got much of a foothold here." One reason for the Front's failure was the condemnation of Coughlin by Archbishop George Cardinal Mundelein. Although restrained by an illness which would soon take his life, Mundelein issued a paper which castigated Coughlin and his political activities. The priest was not "authorized to speak for the Church," Mundelein asserted, nor did his views "represent the doctrine or sentiment of the Church." Too ill to deliver the statement himself, Mundelein had it read on a national radio network by auxiliary Bishop Bernard J. Sheil.

Another reason for the Christian Front's failure in Chicago was its inability to attract young men in their late teens and early twenties. In New York this group had

80 *Chicago Catholic Worker*, March, 1941.

81 Tull, *Father Coughlin*, p. 203. Marciniak believes that Mundelein's lead on this issue had a tremendous effect on stemming anti-Semitism in this city. Historian George Flynn emphasizes Mundelein's close association with Franklin Roosevelt and suggests practical political reasons for Mundelein's criticism of Coughlin, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), pp. 185-86. However, it appeared that Mundelein who John Cogley described as one of the "outstanding bishops in American Catholicism" felt more was at stake than political expediency. Cogley, *Catholic America*, p. 153.
provided the backbone of the Christian Front, but in Chicago these young people had other diversions. The national C.Y.O. (Catholic Youth Organization) under Bishop Sheil was just blossoming, and CISCA also attracted a large number of young men. And for those with more extremist or romantic strains, there was the Catholic Worker. "Students have been a wonderful help," Cogley wrote in the Worker. "They come down on Saturdays and help clean house . . . , and feed men who but for circumstances may have been a brother or a father . . . ."

Those inclined to extremism also felt at home at the Catholic Worker. One high school student took pleasure in thrilling members of the house with stories of his confrontations while selling the Chicago Catholic Worker. Once he and some friends were arrested in Aurora for

82Roger L. Treat, Bishop Sheil and the C.Y.O. (New York: Julian Messner Inc., 1951). For the type of person he attracted see introduction, pp. vii-xi; for Sheil's position regarding Coughlin, see pp. 171-77. Father Carra-bine was a member of the Committee of Catholics to Fight Anti Semitism; his name appeared on membership list published in Voice, July, 1939. Sister Cecilia Himbaugh in an interview stated that at CISCA "we always attracted a certain type: the outsider, the person who either stood apart or above the rest, the one with an extra amount of energy or zeal."

83Chicago Catholic Worker, April, 1940.
selling the paper. "Of course they [his friends] were a little nervous this being their first time in jail," he reported. The police "wanted to know about this 'Peter Maurin agitator'," who appeared as the headline story, but after "we propagandized them," he bragged, "they let us go." 84

Not only did they influence and attract the very group to which the Christian Front appealed, but the Chicago Catholic Worker, along with its counterpart in New York, waged a vigorous journalistic campaign against Coughlin and the Christian Front. "It has become quite the thing these days to be anti-Semitic," Cogley editorialized. "Suddenly, people who never gave it a thought are . . . discovering that the Jew is to blame for all their troubles." 85

In another editorial addressed to "Our Jewish Readers" Cogley apologized for the "rotten situation" of having " . . . to admit the anti-Semitism of some of our fellow Catholics." Our duty, he asserted, "is to fight it with charity and justice." 86 Catholics seem to have forgotten,

84 Ibid., June, 1939. 85 Ibid., December, 1938. 86 Ibid., June, 1939.
he complained, that in the words of Pope Pius XII, "Spiritually we are all Semites." 87

Coughlin did not ignore the criticism of the Catholic Worker. As early as 1937 his paper, Social Justice, warned that a "fake headline of the Catholic Worker misleads American workingman." Coughlin advised his readers that although the paper bore a Catholic name and quoted papal encyclicals, it compromised itself on the issue of Communism. Coughlin quoted the late bishop of Detroit, Michael Gallagher, who was his most influential supporter. The bishop had stated, Coughlin reported, that "despite all references to the saints, the Popes, and the encyclicals, its [Catholic Worker's] attitude on the Spanish question was enough to make one wonder if the thing were not downright Communism camouflaged in Catholic paint." 88

The controversy with Coughlin also brought Cogley national attention as a journalist for the first time. In an open letter to the priest, which Social Justice

87 Ibid., December, 1939.

88 Social Justice, July 5, 1937. Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, pp. 142-53, records the struggle between the Catholic Worker and Father Coughlin. Patrick Scanlan, editor of the Brooklyn Tablet and staunch Coughlin supporter, went so far as to attempt to have the Catholic Worker suppressed by the Archbishop of New York.
reprinted in an edited form, Cogley attacked Coughlin for his anti-Semitism which he perpetrated through innuendo, misquotes, and slander. In its edited form the letter appeared polite enough and was used by Coughlin to emphasize his assertion that he was only against "bad Jews" and "good Jews" should be left alone.\(^89\)

Addressing him as the "most powerful voice in America," Cogley told Coughlin that there were "... people who don't have much sense who have rallied beneath your banner." These people, Cogley continued, have used "your controversial Russian figures to justify a senseless, unchristian attitude toward Mrs. Cohen the delicatessan lady around the corner, and Mr. Meyer, the insurance collector. ..." The priest should set these wrong-minded

\(^89\)

This differentiation appeared frequently in Coughlin's broadcasts. For example, on Sunday, December 4, 1938, he told his audience that anti-Semitism was not the issue, "decent Jews ... must repudiate atheistic Jews and international Jews." See Charles Coughlin, Am I An Anti-Semite? (Detroit: Condon Press, 1939). His argument apparently influenced his listeners. In a letter to Dorothy Day one woman stated, "It surprised me greatly that you should take this stand [against Coughlin] ... ." The letter continued, "Why shouldn't we know the truth about the Jewish situation. ... He was most careful to make a distinction between the good Jew and the bad Jew, Father Coughlin was very careful to make that clear." M.S. to Dorothy Day, n.d., Catholic Worker Papers, Marquette Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
people straight, Cogley advised, and "help make up for the pain and insult many innocent Jews have received from your confused followers." 90

The portion of the letter which Social Justice printed shaded the anger with which Cogley castigated Coughlin. The full text of the letter which appeared in the Chicago Catholic Worker was the strongest attack on the priest at the time. Cogley told the priest that

followers of yours have become Jew baiters and have quoted you in order to hold the threat of a pogrom over the Jew. It is your responsibility to set your followers straight . . . [since] anti-Semitism among Catholics is due to inept, untimely, stupidly misconstrued study of Judaism you have devoted yourself to these last months. 91

In addition to their journalistic campaign against the Coughlinites, the Chicago Catholic Workers also helped organize the "Committee of Catholics to fight anti-Semitism." The formation of this group was originally conceived by Emmanuel Chapman, a Jewish convert to Catholicism

90 Social Justice, May 22, 1939.

91 Chicago Catholic Worker, May 1939. Tull also quotes this letter from Cogley. Although he described it as the "Best Catholic critique" of Coughlin, he called it a "gentle" criticism. Tull apparently read only the Social Justice version of the letter. The edited letter hardly represented the enmity which existed between Coughlin and the Catholic Worker. Tull, Father Coughlin, pp. 208-209.
and professor of philosophy at Fordham. He enlisted the aid of Dorothy Day, and together they attracted a group of people concerned over the deterioration of Catholic-Jewish relations. They published a paper called Voice which solicited prominent Catholics' views against anti-Semitism. The paper also sent reporters to Christian Front meetings in order to expose the group's activities. In addition they enlisted a group of volunteer speakers who presented the fallacies of anti-Semitism to Catholic groups.

The Chicago Catholic Workers formed a companion to the New York committee in July, 1939. They enlisted the aid of professors from Notre Dame and the University of Chicago to write articles for Voice and to serve on a free speakers bureau which travelled to local school and parish

92 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 152.

93 Voice, September, 1939 issue described a Christian Front meeting where a film was shown: One part of the film showed a Jewish girl selling Equality on the street. This brought comments from the projectionist such as "Look at that beak!" "Watch those kikes!" "Look at that dirty Communist Jew selling Equality!"

94 Program of the committee as outlined in Voice, August, 1939, and in New York Times, August 7, 1939.

groups. Ed Marciniak became permanent chairman of the group. He coordinated speaker appearances, wrote articles for Voice and planned radio broadcasts against anti-Semitism. These broadcasts varied from short quotes against anti-Semitism to full programs with panels which discussed the issue. From the headquarters in Chicago the committee sent speakers and broadcasts throughout the midwest, even to Coughlin's own city of Detroit. Although their accomplishments were small, at least it provided a small comfort for the Jews suffering through the greatest crisis in their history.

Since Chicago never experienced the full burden of an organized Christian Front movement, many thought that the Catholic Worker reaction was an exaggeration of fact. Irate readers deluged the Catholic Worker office with letters calling them "alarmists," "hypocritical Jew lovers,"

96 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 152; Cogley, Catholic America, p. 97.

97 Marciniak interview; Falls, interview; New York Times, August 7, 1939; Voice, September, 1939.

98 Chicago Catholic Worker, Juley, 1939. Marciniak recalls nervously addressing a group in Detroit one evening. Marciniak interview.
who "reached rash conclusions on little evidence." Members who sold the paper on the street were frequently victimized by attacks of abusive language and some were physically assaulted.

The accusations of many were silenced on January 14, 1940 when they read in their morning papers that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had uncovered a plot by the Christian Front in New York to take over the National Guard ammunition deposits in New York, blow up the offices of the Daily Worker and B'nai B'rith, and eventually take over the government. Even those who laughed at such precocious plans shuddered when they learned that the head of the National Guard armory sympathized with the Front's plan, as did many police captains who would have been expected to provide the first line of defense had such a coup been attempted.

Coughlin supported the Christian Front throughout

99 *Chicago Catholic Worker*, January, 1940.

100 Joan Smith O'Gara interview, James O'Gara interview, June 22, 1976, Rockville Center, N.Y.

101 *Chicago Tribune*, January 16, 1940.

102 *The New York Times*, January 16, 1940 (police story); ibid., May 3, 1940 (National Guard story).
their trial and after this final departure from reality he lost much of his following. Shortly after this episode Coughlin withdrew from the public scene under threat of being defrocked by his Archbishop, Edward Mooney. Soon his crusade became a memory but the germ of anti-Semitism spread by Coughlin had, until 1942, threatened to become a national epidemic. Throughout the crisis the Catholic Worker, both in New York and Chicago, remained Coughlin's staunchest opponents, reminding their Jewish friends that not all Catholics were prepared or willing to join the nativists' campaign. Despite the stereotype of the narrow-minded, bigoted Catholic there remained throughout the Coughlin period a group of Catholics who scrutinized the priest's accusations and carefully refuted each of them.

In addition to leading their Church into unexplored realms of social action, the men on Blue Island Avenue helped plant the seeds for what would become the center of the intellectual upheaval of the Church in the 1960's. The Catholic Workers were the first group in this country to practice and experiment with liturgical reform which

103 Tull, Father Coughlin, p. 235.
would alter the form of public worship. According to David O'Brien, "The most significant practical expression of the integral Catholicism and personalism taught by . . . Michel was the Catholic Worker Movement." O'Brien, Catholics and Social Reform, p. 192.

Following the thought of the Benedictine liturgist Virgil Michel, the Workers believed that a liturgy which involved the laity of the Church in an active worship would emphasize ties which bound Christians together and this in turn would make the average Catholic aware of the social obligations he had to his fellow man. According to Michel, the liturgy of the Church provided man "with the divine model of social fellowship made up of individually responsible persons; it gives to each member," Michel concluded, "the inspiration of a personal growth . . . and it is itself the very source of all . . . help by which alone man can achieve his highest development as a person and as a member of this fellowship." In Europe the liturgical movement was an issue of abstract theological theory but in this country Michel viewed it as a "solid foundation for

Virgil Michel, "Personality and Liturgy," Oratres Fratres (February 19, 1939), p. 159. This magazine which Michel edited until his death is the chief source for his ideas.
the cooperative spirit of the Christian social order."106

"Whether we thrill to the proposition or not," Cogley wrote in the Chicago Catholic Worker, "By receiving Holy Communion" the individual becomes "one with the poor Negro charwoman in the rear of the Church . . . , with the horny handed laborer in the coal mines, [and] with the unwashed Russian peasant. . . ." There was a revolution inherent in the act of going to mass, Cogley concluded, since it "demolishes all barriers . . . that separate man from his fellow man and raises obligations of justice."107 Because of its social implications this idea always remained important to Cogley.

Liturgical reform never accomplished what Cogley hoped it would. Conservative Catholics viewed the changes as attacks on their Church aimed at destroying it. The liturgical movement which the Catholic Worker helped precipitate became a fundamental element of the Vatican Council reforms. Rather than helping to develop a new sense of community, these ideas became symbols of polarization

106 O'Brien, Catholics and Social Reform, p. 190.
107 Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1940.
within the Church. In the thirties, however, Cogley and other Catholic Workers were hopeful of the benefits of liturgical reform and made it an instrumental part of their program of social action.

In the December, 1939 edition of their paper the Workers announced that a series of lectures would be held at the Catholic Worker house on the subject of Church liturgy and social reform. Although the talks were free, they stated that those who wished to attend must fill out an application. They made this requirement in order to be certain they would have an audience. The house on Blue Island Avenue was never as successful attracting audiences as their counterparts on Taylor Street.

Their last lecture had almost ended in disaster. A famous monk had come to give a lecture on mendicant orders and only two people came to hear him. In order to avoid embarrassment for both the noted speaker and

108 James Hitchcock, *The Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 115-37. In this chapter Hitchcock summarizes the conservative's arguments for maintaining the traditional institutions of the Church, but he fails to present the case of the liturgical reformers, and the reasons why they wanted change.

109 *Chicago Catholic Worker*, December, 1939.
themselves, the Workers asked some of their houseguests if they would attend the talk. Unlike many places of refuge, the Catholic Worker House never demanded attendance at a sermon before providing a meal. Recognizing their benefactors' plight, a number of the men rubbed the spots off their cleanest shirts and slipped into the back alley. A few minutes later they appeared at the front door, politely took their seats and listened to a discourse on a topic they neither understood nor cared to hear. Face being saved, the Workers resolved never to place themselves in that situation again. 110

The announcement and the request for applications not only avoided a similar embarrassment but it served, they soon discovered, as a successful ploy to attract large crowds. "The place was filled to the rafters," Jim O'Gara recalled, and the Worker reported, "The liturgy classes are being well attended. Last Friday night we were taxed to capacity. . . ." There were people from "all walks of life . . . , a large number of college students, a couple of seminarians, a good number of professional people, some

110James O'Gara interview.
unemployed, and several social workers."

These were exciting times for the men who ran the Catholic Worker house. With their plunge into social action, their soup line, and their newspaper, they confidently assured themselves that they were implementing a new creation. As Andrew Greeley has pointed out: "In the late thirties in Chicago there began a series of experiments which would anticipate in many respects the spirit and teachings of the Vatican Council." These experiments, he continued, "would be imitated all over the United States and the men who began them would become national figures and heroes of the progressive Catholics of the country." Another Catholic thinker recently wrote that as a student in Chicago he and his friends formed a quite conscious sub-culture within American Catholicism. "We read, argued, and acted, as the spirit of the ancient Church supported us." "We had new Gods," he confessed, and "John Cogley was mine." Writing in the mid-sixties when change for the

111 Chicago Catholic Worker, January, 1940.
113 Donald P. Costello, "The Chicago Ghetto" in
better seemed imminent, David Costello pondered the activities of the Chicago Catholic Worker on Blue Island Avenue and concluded, "The battles planned and fought so brilliantly by the Cogleys, Marciniaks, and O'Garas seem to be almost won."114


CHAPTER IV

LABOR

On Memorial Day, 1937 the crack of gunshots pierced the air outside the Republic Steel mill. Ten workers died and many more fell seriously wounded from the barrage of bullets and billyclubs which rained upon them that day. "Whom shall we blame for this horrible spectacle of violence?" Dorothy Day wondered. "Of course the police and the press placed the blame on the strikers. But I have lived with these people," she wrote. "I have eaten with them and they are men and women like you and me, many of them never having been in a strike before." She then recalled that some had even brought their children to the picket line that day, "It had been a supplicatory procession."¹

A number of Catholic Workers had witnessed the violence that day. Since the previous fall they had been working with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee urging

¹Catholic Worker (New York), June, 1937.
the employees of "Little Steel" to organize.² Van Bittner, the regional director of S.W.O.C. had embraced the Catholic Workers as an important ally.³ He welcomed their talks and pamphlets directed at primarily Catholic audiences which explained that they had a right and an obligation to support good unions. "Our presence caused quite a stir," Arthur Falls reported, "People could not get over a group in the name of Catholicism being interested in labor."⁴

When the anticipated strike finally occurred on May 27, 1937 the Catholic Workers lent their full support. Carrying signs which quoted papal encyclicals supporting a just wage, they joined the picket lines. They sat with the strikers in "Sam's Place," a tavern at 113th and Green Bay Avenue which served as strike headquarters. In the rambling old building they fixed sandwiches and coffee, attempting to maintain the morale of the workers in their ill-fated struggle with the steel industry.⁵

²Ibid., November, 1936. ³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵As reported by Cogley, Catholic Worker (New York), July, 1937, and also in his autobiography, Canterbury Tales, p. 13. Catholic Worker presence and work at the steel strike is also supported by interviews with Arthur Falls, June 19, 1976, Western Springs, Illinois; Ed Marciniak, October 31, 1976, Chicago, Illinois; Tom Sullivan,
A few had even marched that warm Monday evening when the police, encouraged by the praise of a Chicago Tribune editorial, defended the property of Republic Steel against the onslaught of "Steel Strike rioters." Police reported that shots which rang from the crowd justified the slaying, but John Cogley reported, "There were no arms... [among the strikers], unless they were magically concealed on others who marched with us." Cogley had talked with a young boy at the strike headquarters who told him that "my brother's here on strike... and my brother-in-law is a policeman on duty here." "It was a peculiar war," Cogley interjected, in "which brother is set against brother.""Where does the blame for oppression lie?" Dorothy Day questioned. "Shall we blame Tom Girdler of Republic Steel? Shall we blame only the police?" Could people ignore "the guilt of the press or the pulpit, or other


6 As they were described by the Chicago Tribune, May 31, 1937. The Tribune editorial which supported the police for action taken against the strikers on the Friday before Memorial Day appeared in the morning editions on the day of the attack.

7 Catholic Worker (New York), July, 1937. 8 Ibid.
agencies that have failed to raise up their voice in protest?" "We are all guilty," she asserted, "In as much as we have not gone to the working man . . . and in as much as we have not inclined our hearts to his and his to ours so that we could work together in peace . . . in as much as we have not protested such murder as occurred in Chicago," she believed, "We are all guilty."9

Into the class conflicts of the thirties, the Catholic Workers immersed themselves, protesting its causes with Christian personalism. "The capitalist system has forgotten the traditional Christian respect for the dignity of the individual." Ed Marciniak wrote in the Chicago Catholic Worker, "... and modern society fails to appreciate the fact that Christ became man and by so doing ennobled human dignity."10 They directed their attacks on capitalism to their predominantly Catholic audience.

By the end of World War I American Catholics had finally entered the mainstream of American life. As John Cogley pointed out in a recent work, "With the emergence of the lace curtain Irish, the embourgeoisment of the Germans

9 Ibid., June 1937.
10 Chicago Catholic Worker, May, 1939.
of the Middle West, and the growing prosperity of the Italians, the Church's financial picture [in the late twenties] was bright. 11 Although most Catholics welcomed their newly acquired status, Catholic Workers felt that too much had been sacrificed for worldly comforts and most Catholics had forgotten the humanizing aspects of their religion. Although "Catholic Social Action had been heralded and acclaimed with fervent fanfare," Cogley editorialized, social problems remained. "Real Catholic Action never occurred," he complained, as "... it was lost in long winded orations, ... speeches, press releases and pamphlets." 12 The truth remained that "very few Catholics really cared for the poor. ..." 13

It was these same Catholics, Ed Marciniak pointed out, who condemned poorer members of their faith for casting their lot with the Communists. 14 In the thirties the Communists made successful inroads among Catholics. Although many sympathized with the Communists as a result of popular front political activity, such as the "Free

12 Chicago Catholic Worker, April, 1940.
13 Ibid. 14 Ibid., November, 1938.
Ireland" movement, or their opposition to Nazi Germany, many more joined the ranks of the Communist party for their defense of the poor and unemployed. Impoverished Catholics, as well as other poverty stricken workers, agreed with the Daily Worker which condemned the bishops of America in 1937 for "defending the rights of capital to suck profits from undernourished bodies and growing minds of little children. . . ." They also agreed with the Daily Worker assertion that "the Catholic hierarchs are serving the brass god of Mammon."15

Marciniak felt that the lure to the Communist party among Catholics was because Communists, unlike Catholics, actually practiced their beliefs. "Sincere intelligent Communists are living in the drabbest neighborhoods among the neediest people," he pointed out, "while we Catholics sit in upholstered chairs announcing our great love for the poor." The Communists were "preaching Marxism to the poor," he chided, "while we Catholics talk Christianity

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15This particular condemnation came in response to the bishops' opposition to a child labor law on the basis that it would undermine the traditional authority of the family. Ralph Lord Roy, Communism and the Churches (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1960), p. 132.
The Catholic Workers felt it was time for the poor laborer to realize that the Church had a social program for him. "We must go to the worker as one of them," Marciniak affirmed. "Million dollar institutions in the middle of slums will not help the worker," he insisted, "but simple homes with simple tables, simple hospitality and simple comradeship will." He told his fellow Catholics that "going to the worker should be a matter of conscience for all of us." The Church's position should be on the side of the downtrodden, he believed. "When the exploiters of human dignity can look to us for condemnation regardless of how much they seem to be the pillars of the Church," and the exploited can look to the Church for hope, then, he affirmed, "we will be going to the Worker."

In the thirties a number of socially concerned Catholics voiced a concern for the rights of labor, but few groups emerged which could rival the support given by the Chicago Catholic Worker to unions and union organizers. Although many Catholic leaders supported the rights of

16 Chicago Catholic Worker, November, 1938.
17 Ibid.  
18 Ibid.
labor they disagreed over the means which should be utilized to achieve justice for workers. These disagreements became especially marked in the late thirties when the CIO launched its great organizing drive. Even Monsignor John Ryan, the best known leader in Catholic social action, questioned the desirability of a strong industrial union. As one historian has pointed out, "Like other pioneers of American Social Catholicism, Ryan regarded co-operatives and voluntary stock and profit sharing programs as more promising avenues to social justice than trade unions." 19

Many important leaders of Catholic social action opposed the CIO because there were offensive elements in the union which involved issues more basic to their Faith than social justice. Particularly troubling to many

19 David O'Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform (New York: Oxford, 1968), p. 99. Ryan's biographer, Francis Broderick, would not agree with O'Brien. He states that the priest did not let "his distaste for real communists affect his support for the Committee for Industrial Organizations." Ryan's support, however, was a qualified approval and only came after he was pressured by a few leading bishops to make a statement condemning the CIO. Ryan's biographer fails to mention the frequent times the priest castigated the CIO, especially during the Sit-Down Strikes. Right Reverend New Dealer (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1963), pp. 234-45. For Ryan's views on the Sit-Down Strike see John A. Ryan, "The Sit Down Strike," Ecclesiastical Review 96 (April, 1937): 419-20.
Catholics were the sit-down strikes which offended their assertion of the right to private property. The violence emanating from many strikes and the presence of Communists in important union positions also disturbed many Catholics.  

When the Chicago Catholic Workers decided to support the CIO in their city it marked a distinct difference from the approach to labor taken by their counterparts in New York. Although Peter Maurin applauded the sit-down strike as an example of Gandhi's effective non-violent protests, he viewed unionism in general with disdain. 

20 In 1937 the Bishops of the United States in a joint statement warned labor against the use of violence and coercion and urged them to form joint bodies with employers to settle disputes. Ralph Huber, ed., Our Bishops Speak (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 98-101, 305-306. Bishop Lucey of Texas was one of the few Catholic leaders who remained unenthusiastic about Catholic campaigns against the Communists. In fact these crusades against Communists in the unions troubled him so greatly he declared that those who accuse the unions of being filled with communists were "slandering the working class." Robert J. Lucey, "Labor in the Recession," Commonweal 38 (May 6, 1938):47. For example of Catholic reaction to the Sit-Down Strike see Paul Blakely, "Labor Wages a Losing Battle," America 56 (February 6, 1937):417-18. John Fichter, "What's Wrong with the Sit-Down Strike," Catholic World 145 (August, 1937):562-72. 

"Strikes don't strike me," he commented to Dorothy Day after reading an edition of the Catholic Worker which overflowed with strike news.22

Maurin's romanticized concept of work was offended by the presence of unions. To him, work was an art which the craftsman donated freely for the betterment of the community. It was a concept which called for the expression of society in terms of community rather than conflict. Conflict had usurped community, Maurin believed, when capitalists forced labor to become a commodity rather than an expression of art. He felt that unions, by demanding a higher price for their commodity of labor, accentuated the problem of exploitation regardless of the price extracted.23

22 Ibid.

23 For his theory of the Worker as artist Maurin leans quite heavily on the work of Eric Gill. See It All Goes Together (New York: Devin Adair, 1944) for a selection of essays and bibliography of Gill. Maurin's view of labor is also in many ways Marxian. Marx affirms that historically the worker has always been exploited, but he admits that in the middle ages this exploitation was disguised by "patriarchal idyllic relations." Marx credits the bourgeoisie with destroying this false relationship between worker and exploiter. The Bourgeoisie, he asserted, "have pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors'." The primary difference here between Marx and Maurin is that Marx would call the "idyllic relationships" referred to illusory,
Maurin's view of labor unions became tempered in the Catholic Worker, however, by the presence of Dorothy Day. Her years as a socialist caused her to view the problems of labor in terms of class conflict and for this reason she favored unionization. Her intellectual background caused her to affirm "the right and duty of the workingman to organize. By himself," she believed, the "worker can do very little . . . [therefore] he has to join in association . . . with his fellows to have the strength to meet with his employer to bargain collectively." But Maurin's logic added to her own thoughts caused her to believe that when the Catholic Workers attend a strike meeting or demonstration or support a labor movement in the paper, they "... are trying to bring the social teachings of the Church to the man in the street . . . we are not endorsing one faction or another . . . The great job of the Catholic Worker," she affirmed, "is to try to reach the workers, bring them a philosophy of labor, and speak to them whereas Maurin would not. Also Maurin would deny Marx's assertion that "natural superiority" necessarily connotes exploitation. Quotes of Marx from Robert C. Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: Norton Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 336-37.

*Catholic Worker* (New York), September, 1937.
of Christian solidarity."  

In Chicago the Catholic Workers were only slightly influenced by Maurin's concept of work and they immersed themselves in the more practical task of organizing the industrial worker in an AF of L city. To Ed Marciniak, unionism was not a matter of "wealth versus numbers" but rather a question of "human solidarity." Rejecting Maurin's theoretical approach to the way society should be, he accepted the way things were and searched for more immediate solutions to the exploitation of labor.

To Marciniak good unionism provided an answer for labor, since, perceived properly, it implied "men joining together to protect their human dignity." The Chicago Catholic Workers, and Ed Marciniak in particular, felt that it was the obligation of Catholics to join unions and exert an influence on them so that the true meaning of unionism could be understood. Without a humanizing influence that would emphasize the idea of human solidarity, Marciniak feared that labor would set up "... an aristocracy within its ranks ..." which would remain "indifferent to humbler

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26 Chicago Catholic Worker, March, 1940.
unskilled workers . . ." and the primary cause of human dignity would be lost.27

There was no doubt in Marciniak's mind that the future of American labor lay in the "CIO or at least in the principle of industrial organization." It troubled him that there were few Catholic leaders in this union and that Catholics seemed willing to let the Communists have a free rein in the new labor movement.28 Marciniak felt that there should be a group of Catholics, as dedicated as the Communists, who would join in "on the inside fighting . . . for a stronger and better labor movement."29 To this end he directed the Catholic Worker movement of the late thirties.

Chicago had traditionally been a craft union city. Industrial organization as proposed by the CIO had struggled and what success they had achieved was due to aid given them by the AF of L.30 Unlike most places the AF of L and the CIO in Chicago cooperated closely with each

27 Ibid. 28 Ibid., July, 1938.

29 Ibid.

other and the leaders of the AF of L willingly gave assistance to the struggling industrial union.\textsuperscript{31} This relationship was severed abruptly, however, when in 1937 an order was issued from AF of L president William Green, which directed all his unions to break relations with the CIO. It was a sad annulment in Chicago, but the CIO was growing rapidly, and rather than ponder past relationships they eagerly sought new allies.

One of their most important new allies in Chicago was the Catholic Church. Symbolically, the Church played an important role by having popular bishops such as Bernard J. Sheil greet John L. Lewis when he came into town, or having Archbishop George Cardinal Mundelein quote a papal encyclical urging Catholics to join unions.\textsuperscript{32} More important, however, was the grassroots work of organizing, propagandizing, and when necessary, manning picket lines. It was in these activities that the Catholic Worker made its greatest contribution to the labor movement in Chicago.

Before the outbreak of the war, the CIO, suffering from its tragic defeat at the hands of Little Steel, could

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32}For instance, during the meatpackers strike; Newell, \textit{Chicago Labor Movement}, pp. 244-45.
count very few victories for its cause. Two notable exceptions, however, the meatpackers and the newspaper guild, gave the CIO hope and promised better days to come. The Chicago Catholic Worker gave important aid in both these projects and their assistance was an important factor in the success of these actions.

By 1938 most of the newspaper industry had been organized. Printers, truck drivers, and maintenance men all enjoyed comfortable contracts with the large newspaper chains throughout the country. The exceptions to the rule of organization were the newspaper writers. The depression had been particularly hard on them. There were a number of reasons for their lack of organization and low pay. The most frequently cited reason was that newspaper writers were too dedicated, too romantically inclined and too independent for union organization. Although the image of the brash young man dedicated to fulfilling the public's desire to be informed, indifferent to his own

33 Ibid., p. 152. 34 Ibid., p. 190. 35 For example, J. Raymond Walsh, Harvard economist and CIO historian, held this opinion. CIO (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1937), see also the AF of L's, Federation News, September 2, 1935 for a similar opinion.
material condition, may have been a true one, there were other reasons for the newspaperman's plight.

The most obvious cause for their lack of organization was the surplus of their product. Every year, thousands of young men graduating from college descended on the large newspapers eager to begin journalistic careers. The papers took advantage of this surplus of labor and the result was a heavy turnover which eliminated job security and prevented union organization. 36

Some inroads were made by the Newspaper Guild which had been organized by Heywood Broun in 1934, but for the most part this union remained a fragmented one, with some strength on local levels, but nationally, wracked by dissension and discord. 37 Of the five large daily papers in Chicago in 1938, besides the mildly pro-labor Times, only the Hearst papers had a large number of Guild organized writers. 38


In January, 1938, the Guild approached the Hearst management when Emmanuel Levi, the new publisher, began a series of economy drives which resulted in mass dismissals among writers. In a late evening bargaining session the Guild extracted an agreement from Levi not to dismiss any more workers without consultation from the union. In December, 1938, after numerous instances proved that the publisher was ignoring his agreement with the Guild, the newspaper men went out on strike.39

The action began as an exercise in futility. Other unions in the industry sent letters of sympathy to the Guild, but they continued to honor their contracts with the Hearst papers, and the managers took over the editorial jobs.40 The only noticeable result of the strike action against the two papers was that they combined into one publication which they called the Chicago Herald-American. The publishers chose to ignore the strikers and the rest of the industry did likewise, as no news of the strike

39 Guild-Hearst Strike News, January, 1939. Similar account appears in Chicago Catholic Worker, February, 1939; also in Newell, Chicago Labor Movement, p. 189, is the most complete account.

appeared in any daily paper or radio broadcast.\textsuperscript{41}

As the strike began, the Guild searched for allies and found few. The CIO with whom they were affiliated was too weak and the AF of L remained antagonistic.\textsuperscript{42} The craft union represented the other trades in the newspaper industry, and it feared that a prolonged strike by the writers would jeopardize the jobs of their workers. Consequently, the AF of L became one of the staunchest opponents of the Guild. In the December 15, 1938 issue of the Federation News, the AF of L declared that the strike was not "a labor dispute . . . but rather a fight by Communists against a newspaper because of its determined opposition to Communism."\textsuperscript{43}

On the national level the Guild had been accused of being tainted with Communism and its enemies in Chicago exploited the issue.\textsuperscript{44} For this reason support from a Catholic group became significant. In its last weekly issue of the year, Chicago's official Catholic publication,

\textsuperscript{41} Chicago Catholic Worker, February, 1939.

\textsuperscript{42} Newell, Chicago Labor Movement, p. 189; see also Stolberg, CIO, p. 250.

\textsuperscript{43} Federation News, December 15, 1938.

\textsuperscript{44} Guild-Hearst Strike News, January, 1939; Chicago
New World, reported the progress of the strike and announced their total support for the strikers' demands. In addition, Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand, director of the diocesan seminary and an important leader of Catholic social action in the city, lent his support to the Guild, telling them, "The Catholic Church is behind you one hundred percent." The Guild took advantage of these endorsements by announcing "Catholics Support Strike" in a front page headline of their Guild-Hearst Strike News.

Equally important as the symbolic support of Church leaders was the grassroots aid the Guild received from the Chicago Catholic Worker movement. Joe Carrol, a member of the Guild's organizing committee, wrote to the Catholic Worker and requested their assistance. Aware that the Catholic Worker had helped other unions in the past, he told them that the "prestige of your name supporting the

45Guild-Hearst Strike News, January, 1939; Chicago Catholic Worker, January 1939. According to Monsignor John Hayes who played an important part in the strike, when Heywood Broun spoke at a Guild rally he was quick to point out that the only coverage the strike had received was through the Catholic press. He thanked the editors of both the New World and The Catholic Worker for their fair coverage of the strike, Hayes interview, Chicago, June 14, 1976.


47Ibid.
Guild would be invaluable pressure in winning our demands."48

When the strike broke out, the Workers gave their full support. They joined the picket lines, mimeographed pamphlets, contributed sandwiches and coffee, and took part in all the jobs necessary to wage a long strike.49 When writers were beaten and arrested, Catholic Workers were with them. The November issue of the Chicago Catholic Worker reported that one of their members, Harry Read, had been arrested for distributing pamphlets outside the offices of the Hearst-American. Read was acquitted, the Worker reported, but "the sentence was appealed by the Hearst lawyers forcing Read to incur further expense to defend himself."50

The Catholic Workers made another important contribution to the strike with their newspaper. Since the capitalist press in the city refused to publish any news of the strike, the Guild had been forced to print a paper of

48Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1938.

49A picture of Catholic Workers at the strike headquarters and a story on Catholic aid in the strike appear in the Guild Hearst Strike News, January 1939.

50Chicago Catholic Worker, November, 1939.
its own which put an extra strain on its meager resources. Beginning with their January issue, however, the Chicago Catholic Worker provided the necessary journalistic support. After publishing just one issue of the Guild Hearst Strike News, the writers left the responsibility for reporting the progress of the strike to the Chicago Catholic Worker. The Worker provided complete coverage of the strike: outlining the Guild's demands, appealing for funds, and exposing the use of gangsters and thugs by the Hearst press to intimidate the writers. 51

The use of the Catholic paper to report strike news was especially helpful in diffusing a potentially embarrassing situation for both the strikers and a Chicago bishop. During the strike, the Hearst-American published an interview with Bishop Bernard Sheil which implied support for the Hearst papers in their struggle with the Guild. Such support was a significant propaganda tool for Hearst, since Sheil had a reputation as an important advocate of social reform. To many people such a turnabout by the Bishop meant that the Guild must be making extreme or unjust

51 Chicago Catholic Worker, January through November, 1939.
demands on the publishers.  

The Catholic Workers as well as the guild members were incensed over the bishop's reversal. In an open letter which appeared on the front page of the Chicago Catholic Worker John Cogley chided the bishop for supporting the exploitations of the capitalist press. Sheil called Cogley down to his office on Wabash Avenue. He explained to the young editor that the interview had been granted long before the strike began and had nothing to do with supporting Hearst enterprises.

The Workers agreed to publish an open letter from Sheil in their next issue which stated that the bishop's name had been deceptively used by the Hearst paper and that he supported the demands of the striking Guild members. Had this rebuttal by Sheil not appeared, the Hearst papers would have gained an important propaganda edge.

52 Ibid., February, 1939; see also Newell, Chicago Labor Movement, p. 193.

53 Chicago Catholic Worker, February, 1939.

54 Ibid., March, 1939. An account of this episode also appears in a story by Tom Sullivan on the death of Cogley in the Catholic Worker, June, 1976.

55 Chicago Catholic Worker, March, 1939.

56 The Chicago Catholic Worker's support became
When the strike finally ended in the fall of 1939, the results may have hardly seemed worth the suffering of the long bitter struggle. All the Guild achieved was a face saving compromise. But the union had won recognition from the Hearst enterprises and the Catholic Worker became known as an important grassroots ally in labor organizing. Following the Guild-Hearst strike, union organizers from all over the city were anxious to receive aid from the Catholic Worker. The Chicago Catholic Worker frequently published letters from labor leaders either describing an unfair labor practice or asking for aid in organizing.

One organizer who appealed to the Catholic Worker was Van Bittner, chairman of both the Steel Workers and the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee. The Catholic Workers were especially helpful in organizing these industries since the majority of workers in them were Catholic. As Ed Marciniak had pointed out, most Catholic laborers remained suspicious of unions and held attitudes increasingly significant after Hearst bought a full page in the New World to explain their position in the strike; see Neil Betten, "Urban Catholicism and Industrial Reform," Thought 44 (Fall, 1969):440.

57 Strike results published in Chicago Catholic Worker, November, 1939.

58 Catholic Worker (New York), June, 1936.
toward unionism "shaped by the capitalist press." This generalization was particularly true of the meatpacking industry where the majority of workers were European immigrants.

In Chicago an important and sometimes permanent stopping place for many immigrants was the stockyards. Before the turn of the century cleaning and preparing meat had been an important and honorable craft. But in the 1890's the assembly line, or rather the disassembly line, had been introduced into the industry. From that time on, all that was needed to be a meatpacker was a strong back and the willingness to repeat one function continually all day long. A man could spend his entire day for months at a time, slicing the jowls off hogs as their carcasses were drawn past him.

59 Chicago Catholic Worker, July, 1938.

60 Labor historian Barbara Newell breaks down the ethnic division in the packing industry in 1926 as follows: Negroes, 22.4%; White Americans (who may have been Catholic or non-Catholic), 31.4%; Catholic immigrants, 44%. The remaining 2.2% were immigrants from countries who may or may not have been Catholics; Newell, Chicago Labor, p. 151.

After putting nine hours in at the plant, life at home was little better for the meatpacker. He lived in an area called "The Back of the Yards." Houses were dingy frame buildings of varying heights. They were divided into family dwelling units with as many as twelve people living in one small house. All of the houses had running water, but there was usually only one toilet which was set in the hall between the dwelling units. Bathtubs were scarce; over ninety percent of the houses were without them. 62

In spite of their condition immigrant workers remained ignorant or afraid of unions. Since 1936, Ed Marciniak and Al Reser had worked in the area urging packers to organize. 63 Father John Hayes, the spiritual director of the Chicago Catholic Worker, frequently went down to the stockyards wearing his roman collar in order to assure the immigrants that "the Catholic Church is behind the laboring man in his efforts to demand a living wage." 64 It was


63 Catholic Worker (New York), April, 1937. Marciniak interview.

64 Ibid., January, 1937. Hayes interview.
the first time that these immigrants had heard unionism defended by the Catholic Church and it became an important asset in 1938 when the CIO made its big drive to organize the meatpackers.

Bittner faced three problems in organizing the meatpackers, and his association with the Catholic Church helped minimize all of them. First of all the immigrants, reinforced by European prejudices, were suspicious of unions. These fears were greatly diminished by the pamphlets and propaganda of the Catholic Workers. Bittner also faced the difficulty of unifying a group comprised of divergent backgrounds. A common link Lithuanians, Poles, Italians, and other immigrant groups did share, however, was their religion, and the Catholic Worker helped Bittner utilize it. Finally, Bittner had to overcome the powerful propaganda and influence of an industry dominated by corporate giants. The ability to claim the Church as an ally helped neutralize the propaganda of these companies.

In addition to the aid given organizing, the Chicago Catholic Worker revealed the sordid working and living conditions of the meatpackers. Many of these editions

found their way into homes of middle class Catholics who normally would not read a "labor" paper. In one edition they printed an interview with Frank McCarthy of the PWOC which explained the position and purpose of the union.  

Catholic Workers also went to work in the meat factories and gave first hand reports on worker conditions in that industry. The nuns of an exclusive women's college on the North Shore were appalled when they learned that one of their students had spent her summer working in a meat factory. June Gardner reported in the Catholic Worker on the bonus system used at Swifts which forced employees to fight with one another. "One woman's hand was stabbed by a fork of another trying to get lean pieces of pork to trim," she reported. She also commented that there was a noticeable absence "of Negroes anywhere except in the most unskilled jobs."  

The efforts of the Catholic Worker and the PWOC had a successful culmination in the summer of 1939. After two years of organizing, the PWOC held its first national convention. According to one economic historian, this meeting

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66 Chicago Catholic Worker, July, 1938.
67 Ibid., August, 1941. Marciniak interview.
was "highlighted by the first public sanction by a Roman Catholic official of the CIO organizing attempts in the city of Chicago."68 The real significance of the event that day, this same historian claimed, was not the speeches by John Lewis or Van Bittner but rather the drama which unfolded when Bishop Sheil presented a militant defense of labor's right to organize, and urged workers to close ranks behind the CIO.69

Aware of the impact that the Bishop's speech would have on the CIO's organizing drive in Chicago, both the AF of L and the remaining unorganized industries attempted to stifle him. Before appearing, Sheil had been publicly asked by the Chicago Federation of Labor, Hearst newspapers, and representatives of the packing industry to stay away from the convention. The AF of L's Federation News stated that the appearance of Bishop Sheil was unfortunate for it dragged the Church into a situation where it did not belong and it made the issue of organizing a political rather than an economic one.70 He was also

68Newell, Chicago Labor Movement, pp. 167-68.
69Ibid., also Commonweal 30 (July 28, 1930) reported the significance of the event.
70Federation News, August 5, 1939.
threatened by anonymous phone calls. But Sheil remained unaffected. Responding to appeals that he remain away from the meeting Sheils declared, "It is my duty as a priest of God . . . to state clearly and briefly the position that has been expressed by our Pope on matters affecting . . . the economic and social welfare of society." 71

Heartened by the prelate's support, the meatpackers authorized their leaders to call a strike against the meat industry if recognition demands were not met. Two months after the convention, in a surprise reaction, the meat industry accepted the demands of the Packinghouse Workers Union. 72 Bishop Sheil's action played a significant role in the meat industry's reversal, and the groundwork performed by the Catholic Worker for two years prior to Sheil's appearance provided an important preparation for the Bishop's speech that day.

Another Catholic Worker activity which became an important asset to the industrial union was the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU). The purpose of this group, which John Cort founded in 1937 at the New York

71 Commonweal 30 (July 28, 1939).

Catholic Worker house, was to "build an organization of Catholic men and women who were at the same time active members of the established CIO, AF of L, or independent unions." In the fall of 1938 the Catholic Worker in Chicago founded a branch of this movement. Ed Marciniak supported the ACTU because he viewed its primary purpose as being a means of educating Catholic workers so they might have an influential voice within their unions. The ACTU started the idea of the Catholic labor school. The first such school in Chicago began at the Worker house on Blue Island Avenue. This school covered issues important to union members such as lectures on parliamentary procedure and collective bargaining, as well as discussions on the social teachings of the Church. Recognizing the significance of such a project, the Archdiocese of Chicago


74 Chicago Catholic Worker, July, 1938.

75 Cort, "Catholics in Trade Unions," p. 35.

76 Chicago Catholic Worker, July, 1938. Also reported in Chicago Sunday Times, January 29, 1939.
soon opened four labor schools throughout the city.⁷⁷ One of these schools, which met at St. Mary Seminary in Mundelein, was designed specifically for priests. It taught clerics how to approach the question of unionism with their parishioners and what methods to use to encourage them to join unions.⁷⁸ Out of this loose association of learning centers grew the Sheil School of Social Studies.⁷⁹

The most significant contribution made by this association was the assistance it gave to the CIO by attracting Catholics in large numbers into the union. As one labor historian has pointed out, "The ACTU proved to be important to the CIO . . . [in] cities which contained a large number of Catholics."⁸⁰ The institution of labor schools and the enlisting of Catholics in large numbers on the side of the CIO remained the most important contribution of the ACTU.

⁷⁷Cort, "Catholics in Trade Unions," p. 35.

⁷⁸Chicago Catholic Worker, July, 1938; see also Newell, Chicago Labor Movement, p. 244; also Cogley, Catholic America, pp. 92-93; and O'Brien, Catholics and Reform, pp. 112-13.

⁷⁹This school became a center for Catholic Social Action in the forties and fifties. See Andrew Greely, The Catholic Experience, pp. 254-56.

⁸⁰Max Kampelman, The Communist Party vs. The CIO
After the war began and the unions grew more powerful, the ACTU became embroiled in the factionalism which plagued the CIO throughout the forties. The ACTU drifted away from the Catholic Worker in New York, and in Chicago it became defunct. The ACTU began to be dominated by right wing union members intent on driving the Communists and advocates of left wing unionism from power. One labor historian, Art Preis, described the ACTU as the group which campaigned most aggressively against the "outside interference of the Communist party," putting a "great deal of pressure on Catholic unionists like Phillip Murray." This agency, he discovered, "incited the most reactionary tendencies inside the CIO to wage the witch hunt against the Communists." 81

Marciniak in the early forties became disenchanted with the direction the ACTU had taken. In a letter to its president, John Cort, he explained, "We want to emphasize the individual member's own responsibility as a member of his union rather than as a member of a faction." 82

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82Marciniak to Cort, February 4, 1950 (Marciniak's papers).
Objecting to the issue of fighting Communism being a major goal, he told Cort that Catholic union members might lose their "perspective about the main job, which is the reform of the economic and social system, by throwing our weight into a 'let's clean out the labor movement campaign'." 83

Although the ACTU and the Catholic Worker soon parted company, the initial influence of the association remained a great benefit to the cause of unionism in Chicago. The schools begun by the ACTU prospered in Chicago throughout the forties and fifties under different auspices. They never became the red-baiting propaganda centers they were in other cities, and they remained an important asset in union organizing.

Despite its radical origins, the ACTU in the forties had become a reformist organization content to work within established framework. In a final estimation of the ACTU, Dorothy Day, who was leaning more toward the decentralist idea of Peter Maurin, stated that "All they [the ACTU] want is a share in the profits." Unlike the Catholic Worker, they were not interested in "the ownership, 83Ibid.
and the decentralization of the physical business of factories and production and the decentralization of control by widespread ownership." \textsuperscript{84}

Cort, for his part, felt that the decentralist idea was unrealistic. The industrial revolution and its implications could not be repealed, and he believed that any effort to do so was anachronistic. In \textit{Commonweal} magazine he maintained there was not any "aid and comfort for anarchism in the wisdom of the Church . . . , despite the extended and often eloquent efforts of the Catholic Worker movement to find such aid and comfort." \textsuperscript{85}

Generally, the Chicago Catholic Worker remained between the two positions established by Cort on one hand and Dorothy Day on the other. Marciniak rejected Cort's desire to dominate union policy. He wanted to emphasize the individual's responsibility as a member of a union rather than promote the cause of a faction within a union. He felt that factionalism diminished the importance of the individual and when this occurred unions were rejecting

\textsuperscript{84}Catholic Worker (New York), February, 1949.

their most important function. On the other hand, Marciniak as well as most of the other Chicago Catholic Workers rejected Peter Maurin's view of unionism. Maurin viewed collective bargaining and unionism as an immediate necessity, but a transitory one. Rather than build good unions, Maurin felt that more energy should be exerted educating the worker away from the idea of a centralized industrial society. Collective bargaining, he felt, ought to provide a breathing spell for the indoctrination of workers in the idea of "personalist democracy." 

The "personalist democracy" Maurin believed could best be manifested in his conception and plan for farming communities. Although he hoped that through decentralization of industry the communal life he proposed could also be enacted in urban areas, he believed it could be more readily created in a rural environment. Basically his farm ideas were similar to those which had haunted reformers throughout history. But in Maurin's eyes the concept

86 For Marciniak's view on labor see his article which appears in America 100 (February 7, 1959), entitled "Catholic Social Doctrine and the Layman."

87 See article by Peter Maurin which explains his views in Catholic Worker (New York), June, 1933. Also see Joseph Breig, Apostle on the Bum Commonweal 28 (April 29, 1938):9-12.
became peculiarly Catholic. As Dorothy Day has recorded, "Peter wanted to restore the communal aspect of Christianity." He wanted the Catholic Worker to be "rich in voluntary poverty, free to devote itself to the works of mercy." He wanted farms where "families could live and work together . . . where there could be a certain amount of common life, work for all, and a school where all could learn to work." 88

"On a farm," Maurin believed, there existed a way of life "in which all the variety, responsibility, integrity of action which are removed from the usual existence of the wage earner are restored to him so that he can once again function as a human being rather than as a machine minder." 89 Maurin also believed that Catholic philosophy was particularly geared to a communal life. Catholics alone, he stated, "understand that while the family is the primary social unit, the community comes next. And there is no sound and enduring community where all its members are not substantially of one mind in matters of the spirit,

88 Dorothy Day's manuscripts in Catholic Worker papers, Marquette Archives. See also Day, Loaves and Fishes, pp. 42-44.

89 Maurin, Green Revolution, pp. 51-53.
that is to say of religion."\textsuperscript{90}

The farming commune idea remained alien to most Chicago Catholic Workers. They accepted the Catholic Worker ideas of personalism, and the significance of the individual as well as his obligation to the community, but they felt that these ideas should be developed and demonstrated in an urban environment, where most people lived in a modern society.

There was, however, a small group at the Catholic Workers house on Blue Island Avenue who became impressed with Maurin's ideas regarding a farming commune. In an article which appeared in the Chicago Catholic Worker, Catherine Reser explained that "the farming program is an integral part of the Catholic Worker." She feared that the breadline and the shelter had overwhelmed the rural dimension of the movement, but she hoped that "... in the near future the farming commune will become the distinguishing feature of the Catholic Worker movement." With a farm she affirmed, "We hope to demonstrate a way of life in which men could assume personal responsibility for

\textsuperscript{90}\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., p. 53.
their economic salvation.\footnote{Chicago Catholic Worker, March, 1939.}

Those interested in the farm commune began to hold discussions at the Worker house, and Catherine Reser wrote long articles on the idea each month. In the summer of 1940 they were able to put theory to practice. A Catholic woman impressed with their articles and apparent determination to create a more gentle lifestyle, donated one hundred twenty acres of land in northern Minnesota with which to start a farming commune.\footnote{Ibid., May 1939.}

After moving to the farm the Catholic communists soon discovered that there was more to farming than theory and discussions. Tom Sullivan recalled that the city-raised Workers were ill-prepared for their farming experiment. He remembered visiting the farm, and when they should have been getting up to milk the cow, they were just going to bed after a long night's discussion. Even had the Catholic Workers been good farmers, they would have been hard pressed to make the rugged and rocky terrain of northern Minnesota fruitful. Consequently the Catholic Worker farm remained a liability. The house in the city continued
to send food to the one in the country when all along the opposite had been planned. 93

To the disappointment of few, the farming commune ended shortly after the war began, when the draft board sent Marty Paul, the farm's director, to a conscientious objector's camp in New Hampshire. 94

While the farm experiment was being carried out in Minnesota, the character of the house on Blue Island Avenue was changing. An older group of men began to replace the younger ones who were rushing back to the numerous factory jobs which were becoming available.

As the demons in Europe became more distinguishable, people in this country began to see more clearly the need to join in the conflict or at least lend their resources. Domestic quarrels were quickly forgotten, and arm in arm workers and capitalists joined together to create an "Arsenal for Democracy." Forgetting their differences, Americans once again discovered community in an overseas campaign.

93 Sullivan interview.

Apparently the need to defend the worker had disappeared. He was earning a large salary, soon forgetting the pains and conflicts of the depression. Nevertheless, the Catholic Worker still protested the evils of the capitalist system which continued to oppress laboring men, if not in poverty then in more subtle ways. A young mechanic visited the Worker house and told Ed Marciniak about injuries in his factory.

"They talk about human beings as if they were broken tractors," Marciniak protested. "That is the spirit of industry . . .," he pointed out, "especially in time of war." Asserting that disregard for the individual was a root cause of war, he stated, "When a lost worker is only a lost investment, what will happen when the situation changes and it becomes profitable to take a chance losing a worker?" But then, "a fellow does not have to go overseas to become a war victim," he complained, "a steel mill can destroy him just as well but who cares? The money's rolling in, there's enough to pay for the flowers." 95

As the war approached and workers rallied together around their country's cause, the Catholic Workers saw the end of their own views of community.

95Chicago Catholic Worker, October, 1940.
CHAPTER V

PACIFISM

On a wintry evening early in 1941, a few Catholic Workers gathered at a friend's house and listened to some borrowed old records from the World War I era. The music of that time differed greatly from the present, John Cogley felt. "There was an air of gaiety in those days" which was lost midst "so much tragedy of the recent past." Today "our spirit is filled with foreboding ..." His generation preferred the melancholy strains of "The Last Time I Saw Paris" to the bravura of "Over There."¹

Adding to the dispiriting effects that winter was the imminence of war. On Blue Island Avenue they despondently pondered what seemed inevitable. The disruptive force of war had already brushed the Worker house and it promised to intensify. Although the movement had been consistently pacifist, many of the Workers in Chicago felt compelled to re-evaluate their non-violent commitment in

¹Chicago Catholic Worker, April, 1941.
view of the horrors taking place in Europe. During World War II, many Catholic Workers rejected Dorothy Day's insistence on total pacifism, and left the movement for the battles of Europe and the Pacific. America's entry into the war ushered in one of the saddest chapters in the history of the Catholic Worker, and the movement's suffering was another tragedy of the Second World War.

The non-violence of the Catholic Worker movement first emerged during the Spanish Civil War. While most Catholics supported Franco, the Worker under the influence of Dorothy Day began to formulate a theology of Catholic pacifism. She objected to those who viewed the struggle in Spain as the climactic confrontation between Catholicism and Communism. To her, the greatest threat to Christianity was not Communism, but rather the hate precipitated by the war itself. She condemned those Christians who had forgotten their duty of love. "When nobody thinks any longer of fraternity, or their duties of charity, and one seeks his brother to kill him, it is then," she declared, "that as Catholics and among Catholics we have to condemn the wrong sense of those of our co-religionists who deliver themselves up to violence, to insult, and to reprisals for
the sake of pagan principles."² She condemned the young Carlists in Spain who, while wearing large crucifixes, murdered enemies and shouted, "For Christ the King!" "Is it for Christ the King that they kill?" Dorothy Day skeptically inquired.³

The conflict in Spain was a mere flexing of muscle by those powers in Europe that hoped to introduce a new order on their continent. The fascists, encouraged by their victory, and the democracies frightened by it, both accelerated their preparation for the conflict they deemed inevitable. Many in the United States became lured into the whirl of European fears, and agitation for American preparedness spread rapidly.

The Catholic Workers in Chicago took grim note of the new outcry for defense. "In a mad scramble we rush forward in an armament program," Cogley noted. The huge allocations for military production would not provide security, he warned, but would only "serve as an occasion for furthering the rapidly increasing war hysteria." He castigated the government which for months had been

²Catholic Worker (New York), December, 1936.
³Ibid.
curtailing relief programs for lack of funds, but suddenly had discovered "billions for armaments." 4

"Not by arms alone," Cogley asserted, can "we defend ourselves and our values, we should also be doing something about our moral defense." That can only be done, he advised, "by doing something about the social morale and... progress in the nation. It is a short view of things," he determined, "which imagines moral preparation inferior to the piling up of weapons." Although with arms, "we may be able to keep the enemy troops from landing on our shores," he warned that "the security of the totalitarian nations will continue to be a threat as long as there are millions of unemployed." 5

The New York Worker was likewise critical of the preparedness issue and, as war production accelerated, so did Catholic Worker pacifism. When in 1940 Congress began to debate the feasibility of a military draft, the Catholic Worker rose in opposition. "To fight war we must fight Conscription," Dorothy Day declared, "and as long as we are permitted to exist," she asserted, the Catholic Worker

4 Chicago Catholic Worker, June, 1940.
5 Ibid., January, 1940.
would fight conscription. 6 To underscore her opposition to the draft, she published a series of articles in the New York Worker by Reverend Barry O'Toole entitled "The Morality of Conscription." The New York Catholic Worker also published these articles in pamphlet form and distributed them to all the Catholic Worker houses. 7

O'Toole advised that conscription implied the movement of the state into the realm of conscience, in essence, he warned, this meant fascism. He believed that no Catholic could dodge personal responsibility for participation in a war of invasion by presuming his government to be right. The priest asserted that since modern governments had been secularized, that is, emancipated from the Church's control, they no longer could control matters of faith and morals. Therefore, he concluded, Catholics should not presume the moral soundness of the government's decision to wage an offensive war. 8

In July, 1940 Dorothy Day along with Msgr. O'Toole went to Washington where they recorded their official

6Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1940.
7Ibid., September, 1940.
8Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1940 - September, 1940.
protest of the draft to the Congressional committee conduction hearings on conscription.\textsuperscript{9} This was a futile effort, however, and the draft became law a few months later. When the Burke-Wadsworth bill was passed, members of the Catholic Worker were still united on the issue of war. Pledges came into New York from everywhere, including Chicago, promising to comply with Dorothy Day's request to resist the draft.\textsuperscript{10} In less than two months the Catholic Worker office received over nine hundred requests for information regarding the Catholic basis for conscientious objection.\textsuperscript{11}

As the Catholic Worker intensified its resistance to the war, new influences permeated the movement. Father John Hugo, a staunch pacifist, began to have an increasing influence on Dorothy Day. "No doubt pacifism is clear to you," he wrote, "but you have not tried to work it out doctrinally. If you knew no theology," he concluded, "it

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., August, 1940.

\textsuperscript{10}Among these letters is one from Jim O'Gara who said, "I most heartily approve the strong stand you are taking on . . . conscription. I felt sure beforehand, though, that you would." James O'Gara to Catholic Worker, August 2, 1940, Catholic Worker Papers, Marquette Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

\textsuperscript{11}\textbf{Catholic Worker} (New York), September, 1940.
would probably be simple for you to make a decision." But pacifism "must proceed from truth or it cannot exist at all." 

Until 1940 Dorothy Day had used revisionist theories to oppose the war. But it was becoming clear to her that Father Hugo's criticisms were correct. Arguments from history had little meaning in the new European conflict. Nazi Germany was not the Weimar Republic, and those who in retrospect sympathized with the earlier Germany could not make similar conclusions regarding the Germany of 1940. If her pacifism were correct, it must be able to withstand alterations of time and event.

It must, as Father Hugo asserted, "proceed from truth."

12 William Miller, A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement (New York: Liveright, 1972), p. 166. Hugo's criticism of Dorothy Day's pacifism was supported by an opinion recently expressed by Monsignor John Hayes who as a young priest in the thirties actively supported the Chicago Catholic Worker. Hayes stated that "Dorothy was an overzealous pacifist, it was the force of her personality rather than her philosophy which caused many of the young men at the Worker house to accept pacifism." Consequently when the war was upon them, most were philosophically unprepared to defend their pacifism. Hayes recalled one young man, who "was an outspoken pacifist, became a bayonet instructor when the war began." Personal interview with Monsignor John Hayes, Chicago, Illinois, June 14, 1976.

13 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 166.
Increasingly, articles concerning the Catholic basis for pacifism began to dominate the Catholic Worker. Reaching back into the Church's calendar of saints, Dorothy Day emphasized a tradition of Catholic non-violence which Francis Assisi, Isadore Pelusiate, and other more obscure saints had maintained. She also published long intricate theological discussions by Catholic philosophers who substantiated the Catholic pacifist tradition.  

This new preoccupation was met with distress by many readers of the Catholic Worker. "The pacifism you preach is false, unpatriotic, and dangerous," one woman wrote. Before she would send another contribution, the reader asked Dorothy Day to assure her that "not one cent of what I send you will be spent for pacifist propaganda." 

Even those who had been exceedingly close to the movement took exception to its new emphasis. A priest from Louisiana who had been instrumental in the labor movement

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14 Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1940 - December, 1946 especially. For a summary of the Catholic Worker position regarding pacifism see: Francis Sicius, "Catholic Conscientious Objectors During World War II" (Master's thesis, Florida State University, 1973), Ch. 2.

15 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, pp. 167-68. Dorothy Day put a notation in this letter promising to use her donation only "for beans for soup."
and in starting a Catholic Worker house in Houma, wrote to Dorothy Day to "... urge you with all my heart to change your stand." The war, he felt, was a question of "taking every legitimate means to preserve our civilization, or what's left of it, so it will not be set back a couple of centuries by the Nazi Iron Heel."\(^\text{16}\)

The Catholic Worker was no longer distributed or read at the Seattle Worker House. They had stopped, Father H. A. Rinehold explained, "because it was filled almost entirely with pacifism..." which "... tended to arouse pacifists to new outbursts that were far from pacific." They continued, however, to read and distribute the Chicago Catholic Worker.\(^\text{17}\)

Chicago Catholic workers maintained that there was no final Catholic position regarding the morality of the war. "Until the Pope speaks," they affirmed, "... it is the right and obligation of every Catholic to form his own conscience on the issue of the war." They asserted that

\(^{\text{16}}\) Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 169.

Catholics must enlist the writings and teachings of the Church Fathers to reach their conclusions. They rejected the pacifist position that all war was inherently wrong, and maintained that Catholics had the duty to ascertain the morality of the specific conflict.¹⁸

The position taken by the Chicago Worker had become a popular one in the thirties as Catholics caught up in the pacifism of the era rediscovered in their tradition a moral valuation for war. These doctrines regarding a just war had become popularized in the thirties by the Catholic Association for International Peace, an offshoot of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

In a report submitted to the Conference in January, 1932 Reverend Cyprian Emmanuel modernized the just war theory of Saint Augustine. In contrast to the traditional definition of a just war, Emmanuel decided that a declaration of war should not be left up to an individual leader, rather it should be up to the "calm deliberate judgement of the people." He hoped this would diminish the potential of war, for "knowing that the burdens of war will be on them, people will be slower to take aggressive measures."

¹⁸Chicago Catholic Worker, November, 1940.
Emmanuel concluded in his paper that "war, particularly in modern times, inflicts so many, so various, and such enormous injuries upon innocent and guilty alike that it cannot be justified except by very grave reasons . . . ."

Old reasons for war such as national honor were no longer valid, for they "cannot be placed in equal balance with the terrific evils inevitably involved in the devastation of modern warfare."19

With this paper the CAIP emphasized on theological grounds the responsibility for Catholics to give serious consideration to becoming conscientious objectors should the United States enter another war. This view permeated the college campuses so thoroughly in the thirties that a poll taken in November, 1939 revealed that 18,000 out of 50,000 Catholic college students interviewed stated if the United States entered the war, they would have to become conscientious objectors. In addition eighty-three percent of those interviewed believed that there should be a referendum before sending any troops into war.20 Catholic

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Students, *Christian Century* magazine pointed out, were beginning to do some critical thinking on war, and that process went far beyond the mere routine acceptance of the excellent slogan "Keep America out of war."\(^{21}\)

A major weakness of the just war theory was that, much like American foreign policy in the thirties, it was designed to keep America out of World War I. Rather than proposing an active pursuit of peace the program counselled the avoidance of war. The CAIP did advise the need for peace programs involving the exportation of food, culture, education, and medical technology, but the mood of the thirties was not prepared for such activism and the most popular portion of their program remained the just war theory.\(^{22}\) Until 1941 this theory stood well in America. The Chicago Catholic Workers who abided by it agreed with Dorothy Day's conclusions regarding war, even though they did not agree with her means of arriving at them.

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\(^{21}\)"Catholic Students Are Against War," *Christian Century*, 56 (November 22, 1939).

Despite their differences, it appeared that the two papers were united on the issue of pacifism. Although the Chicagoans usually avoided the issue in print, when the draft bill became law they voiced strong objection to it. Viewing conscription as a co-option of conscience, the Catholic Worker in Chicago stated that "the American people have formally admitted that the forces of darkness and despair have triumphed over the Christian standards of freedom and appreciation of man's worth as temples of the holy spirit." They maintained that "compulsory military training is the serious beginning of a totalitarian form of government. Once the . . . federal bureaucracies experience the thrill of controlling the youth of our country," they warned, "reasons will always be found for continuing that control." Also in this particular issue they published an article explaining the position of Catholic pacifism.23

After they published the issue of their paper protesting the Burke-Wadsworth law, the Workers received a phone call from Bishop Sheil's office. A representative of the prelate requested all the remaining issues of their

23Chicago Catholic Worker, September, 1940.
paper dealing with conscientious objection. He explained that the Bishop had read it and wanted the paper distributed at the Youth Congress being held that weekend in Chicago.

Pleased that their efforts were provoking a response the Workers gathered 850 copies of the issue and delivered them to the Youth Congress headquarters in the C.Y.O. building. But the young people attending the conference never saw the Catholic Worker articles regarding pacifism. The papers had been destroyed so that the youths attending the meeting would not become tainted with pacifist propaganda. "Whether it was Bishop Sheil or the Machiavellian actions of one of his many assistants, we never found out," James O'Gara commented years later.24

During the early years of the war in Europe the total pacifism of the New York Worker and the just war theories of the Chicago Catholic Worker were barely distinguishable; both had opposed preparedness and both had protested the draft law. As the war progressed, however, and the atrocities of Hitler's regime became more apparent, many viewed the evil of Nazism as far greater than the evil

24Personal interview with James O'Gara, New York City, June 22, 1976.
of war and they increasingly felt a moral obligation to oppose the madness raging in Europe.

Although a number of Chicago Workers began to see the necessity of entering the war, they kept their views out of the paper. They did not want to accentuate their differences with the New York group. They continued, however, to discuss the issue among themselves. Cogley and a number of others were gradually becoming interventionists. They argued that the conditions necessary for a just war were fulfilled in the conflict with Hitler.²⁵

Using the same theories Ed Marciniak arrived at opposite conclusions. "The dilemma of pacifism becomes more excruciating for me when I realize the only way to stem the tide of Hitlerian nihilism is to utilize the methods which make my conscience squirm," he told Cogley. Although he was aware of the "horrendous menace of Nazism," he could not advocate military intervention. He saw no difference between the Nazis' system and the "very means with which Hitler was being fought." Therefore he concluded, "I cannot give my allegiance to that system and

²⁵Personal interview with Tom Sullivan, Rockville Centre, New York, June 24, 1976; also O'Gara interview.
morally I must refuse my cooperation." 26

Marciniak refused to submit himself to the dominance of a Nazi-like war machine simply because its purpose would be to stem the tide of the Nazis. He believed that if the means Hitler used had been judged immoral, then those acts would be immoral no matter who utilized them. Concentration camps, regimentation, indiscriminate bombing, and other means of World War II were wrong whether done under the symbol of fascism or democracy. 27

When Marciniak was called before his draft board he told them just what he told his friends at the Catholic Worker. He even refused alternative service when they offered it, explaining to the board that "it would be foolish and insincere on my part to object to modern warfare on the basis of conscience, and then turn right around to aid in the promotion of the very same war which I believed to be unjust." 28

The majority at the Catholic Worker House did not

26 Ed Marciniak to John Cogley, August 22, 1942, Marciniak's private papers.

27 Marciniak's written statement to draft board, Marciniak's private papers.

28 Ibid.
agree with Marciniak, as they began to see more clearly the moral obligation to oppose Nazi Germany. Discussions on the subject would often last long into the night, but each side remained convinced of its own position.29

Dorothy Day was becoming increasingly disturbed by the drift of the Catholic Worker away from the pacifist position. She remained committed to the idea that the personalists' role in history was to shun violence. She believed that utilizing war as a means of changing history had always proved unsuccessful. She frequently quoted Dostoevsky who in The Brothers Karamazov had Zossima the prophet declare, "At the sight of men's sins . . . one wonders whether to use force or humble love . . . . Loving humility is strong," he advised, "the strongest of all things and there is nothing like it." Dorothy Day felt that true change could never be swept in on the wave of an unbridled outburst of violence, but rather a real revolution would occur when "numbers of Christians set themselves to live their Christianity socially."30

29O'Gara interview; Sullivan interview.

30Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, pp. 6-8. Quotation taken from The Brothers Karamazov (New York:
Her commitment to pacifism compelled her to cajole the other Catholic Workers as she had never done nor would she ever do again. In August, 1940 she sent to all the Catholic Worker houses what Tom Sullivan years later humorously described as "Dorothy's encyclical." In it she reiterated the pacifist dimension of the Catholic Worker movement. "There are some members of the Catholic Worker groups throughout the country who do not stand with us on this issue," she pronounced. She pointed out that some had even taken it upon themselves to suppress the paper. Since there was a close connection between the personalism of the Catholic Worker and pacifism, she declared that those who were heads of the Catholic Worker houses across the country should be pacifists.

John Cogley troubled over this decree. He had not yet reached a final decision regarding the war, but his position nevertheless was one of conscience not doctrinaire pacifism. He confessed as much to his associates and told them that someone else would have to take over the Catholic


31 Sullivan interview.

32 This letter was published in the Pittsburgh Catholic, September 12, 1940.
Worker house if the issue were not soon resolved. Other Catholic Workers also troubled over this issue. From Seattle came a letter from Father H. A. Reinhold. "I do not approve of this at all," he told Dorothy Day. "I wonder if you can take the whole movement which stands for far more things than conscription and tag it on this one issue throwing out all those who do not agree with you." He also criticized her for adopting "dictator's methods laying down party lines and purging dissenters." 34

Despite the growing opposition, Dorothy Day remained adamant in her position. Basically the idea of the Catholic Worker was stimulated by an intellectual reaction to the growing impersonality and massive organizing power of the modern state. In Dorothy Day's mind, World War II was the culminating product of the modern state, and to comply with it for whatever reason would undermine the basic principles of the Worker movement.

The Chicago Catholic Worker, with John Cogley as

33 O'Gara interview; Sullivan interview.

34 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 168. Reinhold's conviction that Hitler must be opposed had a strong basis—he had recently been forced to leave his home in Germany because of his beliefs and his activism. See John Cogley, Canterbury Tale (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 37.
its director, continued precariously for another year but the war progressively began to dominate every conversation at the house. Dorothy Day continued to fret over the pacifist issue also, and a year after her ultimatum she sent another letter to each house inviting them to a retreat which would be held at the Catholic Worker farm in Pennsylvania. "All Catholic Workers should come," she wrote, "there will be no excuses—we have taken a wife..., we have bought a new farm..., we have a new yoke of oxen..., would not do. We must drop everything, listening to the Lord who will only speak if we keep silent." 

The purpose of the retreat was obvious to everyone at the Chicago house. Dorothy Day had invited John Hugo, the proponent of Christian pacifism, to direct the spiritual exercise. Cogley, O'Gara, and Sullivan returned from the retreat distressed. It became clear while they were in Pennsylvania that they could not remain in the movement which had played such an important part in their lives for the last four years.

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35 O'Gara interview; Sullivan interview.
36 Miller, Catholic Worker Movement, p. 188.
37 Cogley, Canterbury Tales, p. 32.
Cogley decided, on his return, there would be no more issues of the Chicago Catholic Worker. The New York house had spoken, and he did not wish Chicago to become the rallying symbol for the loyal opposition. Soon after his return to Chicago he went to his draft board. While many Catholic Workers returned to their hometowns and sought deferments from their boards, Cogley had trouble trying to enlist.\(^{38}\)

Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand, a well known priest in Chicago, had taken it upon himself to explain to Cogley's draft board the significance of the young man's work on Blue Island Avenue. The draft board, dominated by Italian Catholics, were impressed with the letter from the noted priest, and complied with his request. Although Hillenbrand's action was not connected with the dissent within the Worker community, Cogley could not accept the deferment, especially after his emphatic defense of intervention at the recent Catholic Worker retreat.\(^{39}\)

He finally reached a compromise with the draft board. They would induct him, but only after he had secured a home for each of the old men residing in the

\(^{38}\)Ibid.  \(^{39}\)Ibid.
Catholic Worker house. The Little Sisters of the Poor volunteered to take all his charges, and within two months of the retreat the Chicago Catholic Worker House closed. With his induction imminent, Cogley married Theodora Schmidt, and shortly after their honeymoon, he entered the army. 40

Soon the war was upon the Catholic Workers, and caught in the sweep of events, they had little time to ponder the demise of their community. Jim O'Gara had been drafted along with Tom Sullivan. Marty Paul and John Doebble accepted the pacifism of the Catholic Worker and were sent to a conscientious objector's camp in New Hampshire. Ed Marciniak, granted a deferment, had immersed himself in the labor movement, earning a living by teaching part time at Loyola University. 41

In New York an air of melancholy had engulfed the Worker house. The vibrant days of the thirties were gone. Peter Maurin, who had remained silent on the pacifist

40 Ibid.

41 Marciniak first received a deferment for medical reasons, and later when his medical problem was not sufficient cause for his deferment, he received a deferment for teaching. These deferments, Marciniak recalled, "were procedural. The local draft board was anxious to be rid of me." Marciniak interview.
issue, appeared to have suddenly grown old and lost his spark. 42 The long lines that had characterized the Worker houses were now forming at recruiting stations, and word came in almost daily of houses across the country closing down. The Catholic Worker was suffering the diffusive and painful force of the war and Dorothy Day pondered its fate, as many began to speak of the movement in the past tense.

Before going to their assigned camps, Tom Sullivan and John Cogley visited Dorothy Day in New York. She was glad to see them; as close members of her family, she welcomed them. She did, however, try to persuade them one last time. To her arguments Sullivan responded, "Hitler won't be persuaded by pietistic phrases, Dorothy; the only thing he understands is a gun put to his head." 43

42 Miller, The Catholic Worker Movement, p. 174. After the war Tom Sullivan lived at and managed the Catholic Worker House in New York City. During this time he personally took care of Peter Maurin until his death in 1949. It is Sullivan's belief that Maurin viewed the war as necessary to rid the world of the Nazi terror. Maurin felt this way especially after June, 1940 when Germany had overrun France, his homeland. Maurin's views regarding international relations leaned toward the idea of a strong United Nations. It was Dorothy Day, Sullivan believed, who led the Catholic Worker into the pacifist position. Sullivan interview.

43 Sullivan interview.
Not only a majority of the Catholic Workers, but even her old radical friends could not understand the basis of her pacifism. Mike Gold wrote in the Daily Worker, "I just can't believe the mystic who says he 'loves his enemy'." To Gold it was the most "difficult tenet in Christian theology." Referring to his "old friend Dorothy Day" and her "earnest little paper" he recalled that she had always been an honest person but he would respect her pacifism more had she been a pacifist during the Spanish Civil War. He concluded that she had been more affected by the politics of the fascists in the Catholic Church than she realized. Although his conclusion was wrong, his premise was correct. Pacifism is one of the "most difficult of all tenets of Christian theology." But Dorothy Day remained true to it throughout the war and the rest of her life.

In September, 1943 Dorothy Day took a leave of absence from the Catholic Worker. While on her retreat she could not help but think of the young men who had strengthened the Worker movement throughout the thirties. They were all gone now. In the December, 1943 issue of the

44 Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 172. Dorothy Day had been a pacifist during the Spanish Civil War.
Catholic Worker she mentioned Jim O'Gara and Tom Sullivan on the Gilbert Islands. This was one of the reasons she had withdrawn from the work, she said, "to have time to gather and hold in my prayers all those members of our family, all those dear to us." The Chicago Catholic Workers she thought about were gone, scattered throughout the Pacific and the United States, in army camps and conscientious objector compounds. John Bowers who had been too old for the draft maintained his Catholic Worker House on Taylor Street, but the heart of the movement in Chicago, the house which had fed the hungry, sheltered the homeless and published the paper, was gone forever.

45 Catholic Worker (New York), December, 1943.
CHAPTER VI

ALTERNATIVES TO WAR

In the winter of 1944 Dorothy Day received a letter from Tom Sullivan on the Gilbert Islands in the Pacific. "I often think of you," he wrote. "My thoughts go back to you at odd times such as torrid days while perspiring in a plane, lying on a cot at night staring at the top of my tent . . . , skipping mud puddles to and from work and so on."¹ After the war, when he returned to the Catholic Worker, Sullivan often reminded those Catholic Workers, who had followed Dorothy Day's pacifism, that he and others like him suffered a great deal "to protect you lousy C.O.'s."² But Sullivan had chosen to fight in the war as a matter of conscience and likewise the pacifists had made an equally difficult decision based on their consciences.


The decision to be a Conscientious Objector was especially difficult for Catholics. Within a Church which prided itself on its contributions in time of war, these Catholic C.O.'s found themselves abandoned in a sea of suspicion and contempt. One priest who was a member of a draft board told a Catholic seeking C.O. status, "I am a priest and they are sending them right along . . . if you have been reading scriptures to reach this conclusion you must have been misinterpreting them."\(^3\) Although as late as October 31, 1941 Commonweal reported that 91.5 percent of Catholic priests interviewed opposed a shooting war outside the Western Hemisphere, Catholic leaders quickly reversed their opinion once the war was upon them.\(^4\) Thomas Maynard, writing for the American Mercury, took note of the Commonweal statistic, and predicted correctly, "Of one thing we can be perfectly sure: the moment America gets into the war openly nobody will be more vociferously

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patriotic . . ." than Catholics.  

Fulfilling this prophecy, the Catholic bishops after the war broke out issued a joint statement which affirmed that "America was fighting a righteous war . . ." and urged "all Catholics to unite in praying for victory. . . ."  

To those Catholics who thought participation in war might be a matter of individual conscience, the Jesuit writer Wilfred Parsons responded in Commonweal that "it is beyond the competency of the individual to arrive at any judgement in this matter. . . ." The government, he asserted, has the right to direct "the external actions of the citizens to the common good of the community." He concluded that it "should be obvious . . . that there is nothing in the teaching of the Catholic Church which states that the citizen is exempt from the obligation of bearing arms in a war . . . regardless of whether it is just or unjust."  

7 Wilfred Parsons, "Can a Catholic Be a Conscientious Objector?" Commonweal 34 (June 27, 1941): 226.
One Catholic C.O., writing from a camp stated, that unlike the Mennonites, Quakers, or members of the other "peace churches," Catholics at the alternative service camp did not have the support of "a tradition that we must uphold. . . . Our place in CPS [Civilian Public Service]," he reflected, "is more personal, more individual. . . . "

Ed Marciniak, writing to his friend John Cogley in the service, described his own pacifism as a "seeming handicap which I possess in communicating with my fellow brothers in Christ." In order to overcome this sense of alienation that Catholic pacifists suffered within their Church, the Catholic Worker in 1941 had taken it upon themselves to organize an unprecedented movement, The Association of

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8Catholic C.O., January, 1944. This paper which was published quarterly (with a few exceptions) from September 1943 until September 1945 contained articles reflecting the views of many Catholic pacifists. Gordon Zahn, a sociologist who was also a Catholic C.O., co-edited this paper and remarked years later that he was "impressed that this official ACCO quarterly did catch the prevailing temper of the attitudes and opinions expressed in the camps as he remembers them." Gordon Zahn, War, Conscience, and Dissent (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967), p. 172. Copies of the Catholic C.O. are kept at the Catholic Worker Farm, Tivoli, New York.

9Ed Marciniak to John Cogley, August 30, 1943. Ed Marciniak private papers.
Catholic Conscientious Objectors (ACCO). This group eventually became aligned with the National Service Board of Religious Objectors (NSBRO) and became one of the four original sponsors of the Alternative Service Camps. The NSBRO, comprised of members of the traditional peace churches, had been formed shortly after the Selective Service Act passed in 1940. It was the desire of the NSBRO to establish a series of conscientious objector camps throughout the country which would run independently from the Selective Service. Quaker leader Rufus Jones reasoned, "The great majority of the people do not believe our stand is right. Therefore we ought not let our convictions be a financial burden on them."

The members of the traditional peace churches were

10 Zahn, War, Conscience, and Dissent, p. 163; also personal interview with Arthur Sheehan, New York City, August 9, 1972.

11 Zahn, War, Conscience, and Dissent, p. 162.


13 R. E. S. Thompson, "Onward Christian Soldiers," Saturday Evening Post, August 16, 1941, p. 53.
anxious to use the alternative service camps to dramatize the intrinsic idealism of the pacifist. They wanted to design work that would exemplify their belief that men could live and work together in peace. They hoped this pattern of life would demonstrate that nations could also live together in harmony.\textsuperscript{14} The government quickly stifled their idealism however, and the NSBRO became nothing more than an agency of the Selective Service.\textsuperscript{15}

In February of 1941, Arthur Sheehan, director of the ACCO, went to Washington to present his case for Catholic C.O.'s before the NSBRO. He explained to Paul French, head of the board, that the Catholic C.O.'s would like to have a camp set aside for members of their faith.\textsuperscript{16} Sheehan told French that the New York Catholic Worker group owned a farm in Easton, Pennsylvania which could be used by Catholic C.O.'s as an alternative service camp.\textsuperscript{17} This camp, Sheehan added, could operate at no expense to the


\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Sheehan interview; Catholic Worker (New York)}, March, 1941.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love}, pp. 165-66; Sheehan interview.
government. In essence what Sheehan suggested was a camp that would run independently of Selective Service, which is what the NSBRO had desired for themselves.

French, although he approved of the idea, explained to Sheehan that it would not comply with Selective Service regulations. He did suggest, however, that the government might turn over an old CCC camp which the Association could transform into a Catholic alternative service camp.¹⁸ On April 15, 1941 Paul French sent Sheehan a telegram stating that the Selective Service had approved the request for a camp, and he assigned them to an abandoned CCC center in Stoddard, New Hampshire.¹⁹

The Catholics who entered the camp in June, 1941 did so enthusiastically. They were determined, one wrote to Dorothy Day, to practice the "art of peace," by living and working together in harmony.²⁰ Despite their optimism the experiment proved a dismal failure. The insignificance of the work, coupled with the Siberian-like environment of the New England camp, caused a rapid deterioration

¹⁸ Sheehan interview.
¹⁹ Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, pp. 165-66; Sheehan interview.
²⁰ Catholic Worker (New York), November, 1941.
of the men's sense of purpose. "We have our troubles here," one member admitted, "But consider our circumstances: forty-five men forced together in a crowded place, doing what we think is unimportant work and living in what for the most part are crude quarters at very cold temperatures, thus we have our irritations and our weariness."21

The camp eventually succumbed when the financial pressure became unbearable. Unlike other pacifists, Catholics received no assistance from their Church. Some of the peace churches attempted to help the ACCO but the cost of their own C.O. programs limited their generosity.22 They also received small donations from groups such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the American Civil Liberties Union, as well as the few remaining Catholic Worker houses.23 The contributions never overcame the deficits, however, and the camp was forced to close in March,

21Ibid., July-August, 1942.

22For example, the Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1943 reported: "Eighty five per cent of the Mormon CPS camp observed the second anniversary of the first draft registration by fasting. The amount saved, $13.44, was donated to the Catholic Worker."

23Catholic Worker (New York), March, 1941.
1943. 24

Although the New England project ended in failure, a C.O. program emerged in Chicago which met with a great deal of success. In March, 1942 the government permitted a group of Catholics under the leadership of John Doebble to organize a conscientious objectors' camp at the Alexian Brothers hospital on Belden Avenue. This was the first such project and its success caused hospital work to become a common form of alternative service in the later years of the war. 25 Officials had hoped to keep C.O.'s in

24 Ibid., April, 1943. Despite the fact that Congress had set funds aside to compensate and maintain C.O.'s in alternative service camps, the Selective Service spent no money for this purpose. For six years C.O.'s put in over eight million man-days of free work in the United States at no cost to the government, but at a cost to the peace groups of seven million dollars. The brunt of this bill was born by the historic peace churches. But for the Catholic C.O.'s without the aid of their Church the financial burden became a personal one. See: Wittner, Rebels, p. 72; also: Walter Roe, "Conscientious Objectors," New Republic (January 8, 1945): 49. The plight of the Catholic C.O.'s is revealed in a letter published in the Catholic Worker: "Many of the C.O.'s are not able to pay the $35 a month needed as their share of the expenses . . . the men who are drafted and who are given the status of C.O.'s are forced to pay for themselves, or be supported by the association (ACCO) which of course has no assets at all being made up of C.O.'s themselves." Catholic Worker (New York), March, 1942.

25 Mulford Sibley and Phillip E. Jacob, Conscription
rural areas, isolated from public contact. Due to pressure from hospitals which were drastically understaffed and propaganda issued from the Catholic Worker, the Catholic C.O., Conscientious Objector, and other pacifist publications, the Selective Service agreed to permit the ACCO to begin a hospital program.

Doebble, a former associate of the Chicago Catholic Worker, was encamped in New England at the time, and he readily accepted the responsibility for the Chicago project. Not only did the new camp allow him to escape the barren wilderness of New England, but it also provided a significant service. Working and living in an urban environment also made life more bearable for the conscientious objectors. Most of them had come from cities, and

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27 Catholic Worker (New York), February, 1944.

the isolated life in a forestry camp had contributed greatly to their disenchantment with the project. The city with its various entertainments, libraries, and colleges, promised to make their confinement less burdensome.29

Most of the men at the Alexian Brothers hospital camp had become conscientious objectors due to their association with the Catholic Worker. In order to demonstrate their continued commitment to that movement, they re-established a Catholic Worker house of hospitality. "St. Joseph's house of hospitality has a new address," Jim Rogan announced to Dorothy Day, "1208 Webster, just one block from the Alexian hospital." They began the new venture "in fear and trembling," his letter continued, "because we know the great good that was done at Blue Island Avenue."30

It probably comforted Dorothy Day to know that

29Ibid., May, 1944. Psychiatrist Anton Boisen stated, "One factor in the better morale of the hospital units as contrasted with the camps is to be found in the sense of independence on the part of the hospital workers." "C.O.'s: Their Morale in Church Operated Service," Psychiatry 7 (May, 1977): 22.

30Catholic Worker (New York), July-August, 1942. Before the war, Rogan ran a Catholic Worker house in Baltimore, Maryland.
there was a new Catholic Worker house in Chicago. Although they might not equal "the great good that was done at Blue Island Avenue," during those times of trial, the mere existence of a Catholic Worker house was a significant accomplishment. The vitality of youth on which the Catholic Worker thrived had been sapped by another crusade.

Also, many had become disillusioned with the movement's pacifism. One priest wrote to Dorothy Day, "A rather unfortunate thing happened in my church this morning that makes it advisable for me to ask you to discontinue sending the Catholic Worker to be distributed to the congregation." The pastor explained that his assistant objected to the Catholic Worker's position on pacifism which he said was "against the teaching of moral theologians and against . . . the Bishops of our country who sent word to our President telling him they were in utter cooperation with him in the present crisis." He told Miss Day that if he continued to distribute the paper it would appear that he was acting "against episcopal authority."  

The scene at this particular pastor's church was

31 Reverend George Smith to Catholic Worker, March 10, 1942. Catholic Worker Papers (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Archives).
repeated throughout the country as subscriptions to the Catholic Worker decreased by one hundred thousand during the war years. In addition, the number of Catholic Worker houses fell from over thirty-five in 1939 to eight in 1942. 32

Although "we have no immediate plans," Jim Rogan explained, at least there was another house of hospitality in Chicago, where we can "shelter and feed some of the . . . poor who have no refuge." 33 Eventually they also held discussion sessions which featured guest speakers. The first person to address the group was James Farmer who at that time was interracial secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. 34 Ed Marciniak visited the new Worker house and gave lectures there frequently. They also began a study program at the Worker house which was geared, they claimed, toward rebuilding a world torn by war. In this study program they learned foreign languages and customs and anything else they thought might help them contribute toward postwar reconstruction. 35

32 Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1943.
33 Ibid., July-August, 1942.
34 Ibid., June, 1944. 35 Ibid., February, 1944.
Another project which made alternative service at the Alexian Brothers hospital more bearable was the opportunity granted the men to attend the nursing school there. This program became especially alluring when they learned that the time spent in the classroom counted toward their work hours. Eleven men graduated from the nursing program and others graduated from special training classes in pharmacology, oxygen therapy, and anesthesiology. There were other outlets for the men's creative impulses also, as one group assembled a small publication on the work done at the hospital entitled *Of Human Importance*.  

From the letters that Dorothy Day received it appeared that C.O.'s at the Alexian Brothers hospital found their experience at the Chicago camp far more congenial than the one in New England. The hospital work allowed them a great deal more independence in spite of the longer hours. In addition, the staff there, although they did not agree with the position the men had taken regarding the war, nevertheless appreciated their presence at the hospital. One of the C.O.'s called relations with the hospital

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36 Sibley and Jacob, *Conscription*, pp. 190-193.  
37 Ibid.
staff "perfect." While they "don't agree with our principles," he pointed out, "at least they do not discriminate against us, and we find the administration most kind and generous in caring for our needs."38

In spite of the good relations with the hospital and the activities the Catholic C.O.'s undertook to give them a sense of purpose during their incarceration, some discontent still remained. Early in 1943, John Doebble reported that four men had left the hospital camp. He explained in the Catholic Worker that the men had resigned in order to emphasize their opposition to conscription which they viewed as involuntary servitude.39

Eventually those who deserted the camp ended up in prison. These men felt they were carrying their pacifism to its logical conclusion. Not only did they refuse to take part in the killing, but they refused to comply with selective service, a system which was fundamental to the war effort.40

They found support for their position from Dorothy Day in the Catholic Worker. Although she lent assistance

38 Catholic Worker (New York), February, 1944.
to the Catholics in C.O. camps she herself opposed the system. "If women become eligible for the draft," she wrote, "I shall not register because I believe modern warfare to be murder, incompatible with a religion of love." The "only way to do away with war," she declared, was "to do away with conscription."

During the Second World War, many C.O.'s agreed with Dorothy Day's assessment of selective service. Over one-third of the C.O.'s in this country chose prison over compliance with the Selective Service. Incarceration proved even more unbearable than life in the dingiest alternative service camp. Imprisoned pacifists spent most of their time in solitary confinement, and when not there, they were shunned, ridiculed, and sometimes even attacked, by the other inmates who may have had character flaws but nevertheless were patriotic.

One superintendent of a large prison told a C.O. entrusted to his care, "You C.O.'s may be glad when the

41 Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1943.
42 Ibid.
44 Wittner, Rebels, pp. 84-92.
war is over, but not half as much as I who yearn for the good old days of simple murderers and bank robbers." 45 Despite the fact that they caused and received a great deal of trouble in prison, the Selective Service made vigorous attempts to persuade parole boards to refuse parole to C.O.'s. 46

Walter Roe reported in the New Republic that eight times as many objectors went to prison during the Second World War than during the First. This occurred, he stated, in spite of a "considerably more liberal system and with officials evidently anxious to avoid issues that aroused such extensive criticism in World War I." It troubled Roe that "the problems confronting objectors today have been so poorly resolved." 47

It was a hard time to be a conscientious objector. Unlike World War I, few liberals and intellectuals were or became disillusioned with the Second World War. Due to the nature of the enemy, the righteousness of the cause was never questioned. As one pacifist admitted, "Unlike the

47 Roe, "Conscientious Objectors," p. 49.
Central Powers of World War I, the Axis nations of World War II certainly did their best to provide . . . all the normal conditions of the just war." Writing about the war years later, John Cogley stated that "those who fought it do not, a decade and a half after it was brought to a close, feel that they acted irrationally." He pointed out that no one felt they were supporting one ideology over another, but rather those who took part in the war felt they were "defenders of national integrity, property, and human life, resisting by force those who were on a rampage of destruction." 49

World War I may have been a popular war, but World War II was felt to be a necessary one. On their way to a world war for the second time Americans did not go armed with songs, fanfare and idealism, but rather with a grim determination to end the madness in Europe. Since 1919 the national mood had been transformed from naivete to cynicism. But as one historian has pointed out, "The average American soldier may have resented his General who

48 Wittner, Rebels, p. 121.

lived comfortably with clean clothes and plenty of cock-
tails even more than the enemy he confronted, he neverthe­
less fought admirably." 50 Those on the homefront may have
wondered who was getting rich from the present war but
they met the sacrifices demanded by total war with few
complaints. The thought of Nazi victory became so horrible
to contemplate that any sacrifice seemed minimal.

For an entire generation the issue of war and peace
became judged within the Nazi context, and pacifism or con-
scientious objection became for them an impossible posi-
tion. Especially during the war years, those who refused
to fight were thought to be as demented as the Nazi leaders
themselves. 51 From 1941 to 1945 any man of draft age not
in uniform was held in suspicion if not actual contempt.

50 Frederick Lewis Allen, The Big Change 1900-1950

51 Writing about his experience in a C.O. camp,
Gordon Zahn stated that a Baltimore psychiatrist found
most of the men at one Catholic camp "unstable ... be-
cause they have been rejected by their own Church and find
themselves a minority group with no outside contacts,
looking forward to almost nothing in their situation to
sustain their morale." Zahn recalled that once the C.O.'s
learned that the administration was predisposed toward
this professional opinion they used it as a method "for
going out the open door." Some of the men "who suffered
sudden depressions of serious dimensions made it no secret
to others in the group that they were putting on an act."
Zahn, War Conscience and Dissent, p. 165; see also:
Wittner, Rebels, p. 92.
Without the camaraderie of an alternative service camp or even prison which at times may have seemed better, Ed Marciniak lived in Chicago during the war years as a conscientious objector. These years which he lived with the support of few may have been the hardest of his life. Writing to his friend Cogley, he confessed, "It isn't easy, I assure you John, to sit at home while the rest of the people you know and love are in the thick of battle, shouldering a gun or riding a plane. Physical isolation is bad enough," he admitted, "but to be isolated from the spiritual mind and mandate of the community in which you live is a thousand times worse." 52

At one point he even considered joining the medical corps and going overseas as a conscientious objector. But he changed his mind, deciding that would be a cowardly way of avoiding the dictates of his conscience. On withdrawing this request from the draft board he told them that service in the medical corps would be "foolish and insincere on my part, since even medical service under military direction would aid toward the continuation of the war." 53

52Marciniak to Cogley, August 30, 1943, Marciniak's private papers.

53Marciniak's written statement to Draft Board,
Marciniak, however, was not content to merely avoid war. He hoped to actively pursue the peace for which his friends were fighting. He had told his draft board that he realized "the serious responsibilities I have shouldered as a conscientious objector," and he promised to "try with all my capabilities that God gave me to make positive contributions toward the welfare of society."54 The basis for his new commitment he drew from his experience with the Catholic Worker movement.

Dorothy Day may have been correct emphasizing the spiritual dimension of the Catholic Worker movement, but Marciniak felt that the greatest contribution the movement had made in Chicago was that it provided a refuge for those in need. Through the Catholic Worker, thousands of hungry men had been fed, Negroes discovered another voice raised in their defense as did the Jews, and through the Chicago Catholic Worker, the demands of labor received an unbiased hearing. In order to revive this positive force which had faded with the demise of the Chicago Catholic Worker on Blue Island Avenue, Marciniak planned a new movement and a

Marciniak's private papers.

54 Ibid.
new publication.

Throughout the winter of 1942 and the spring of 1943 Marciniak laid plans for his new movement. The association which he proposed carried on the Catholic Worker tradition but it bore a different name. He called this new group the Catholic Labor Alliance, and its publication Work. He began the project with the same lack of funds with which he began the Catholic Worker. But this time his experience and reputation made gathering funds less of a chore. He appealed by letter to many priests in the diocese who had been familiar with the work on Blue Island Avenue, and he utilized the long mailing list of the Chicago Catholic Worker. During the year of planning Marciniak and his friends collected over three thousand dollars with which to begin their project. In an office at the corner of State Street and Chicago Avenue, which had been donated by Joseph Morrison, pastor of Holy Name Cathedral, Marciniak prepared the first edition of Work.

55 Thomas Gavagan, "Five Years of Work," August, 1948, Box 2, CCWL File, Chicago Historical Society Archives. CCWL (Chicago Council of Working Life) was a later name for the CLA.

56 Ibid.

57 Raymond John Moly, "The CLA Laboratory Test of
In July, 1943, five years to the month after the first publication of the Chicago Catholic Worker appeared, Marciniak completed his first issue of Work. In it he outlined the new publication's purpose and objectives. Although it was a labor paper, he asserted that it would not be "limited to industrial relations, but rather will include all who work." Work, he announced, will be interested in "the plight of the sharecroppers . . . , racism . . . , and public housing . . . among other things." In its first year of publication Work covered issues that had become familiar fare for the readers of the old Chicago Catholic Worker, and it attracted similar interest.

Marciniak carried a bundle of the first edition to a large factory and along with a few volunteers from the seminary, he began to distribute his new paper. As they left the factory, laborers greeted the publication with mixed reactions. "Work!" one employee exclaimed, "I've

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Catholic Social Action" (M.A. Thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1950), pp. 12-13; see also: Gavagan, "Five Years of Work."


59 Work, July, 1943.
had enough of that all day." Another, looking askance at the young men, commented, "Another Communist rag."60

Others took the copies anxiously but many more remained skeptical. One man wrote a letter to Marciniak and asked, "Where were you when things were tough? It's all right to jump on the bandwagon now," he remarked, "but we'd think more of you if you had been around during the critical years when the CIO was organizing the steel workers and the meat packers."

"In 1938 when the big drive was on," Marciniak replied, "I was riding in a police patrol wagon. Along with a few others I was picked up for distributing union literature for the Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee outside the stockyard's entrance. If that was a bandwagon," he answered the skeptic, "then I was on it."61

Marciniak was referring to the numerous crusades he had taken part in while a member of the Chicago Catholic Worker. By founding a new movement and publication he proved that although the war closed the Catholic Worker house it could not stifle the idealism that accompanied it.


Those who read the first issue of *Work* found the same idealism which dominated the *Chicago Catholic Worker*. "We believe," the editor affirmed, "that a return to religion embracing a definite program of action is the basic factor in the solution of social problems." 62

In addition to the newspaper, The Catholic Labor Alliance instituted a number of labor schools. Classes which were held at the Sheil School of Social Studies ranged from abstract subjects such as "An Introduction to Philosophy" to the more practical topic of "Wartime Increases--A Little Known and Little Used Way of Getting Wage Increases Without WLB [War Labor Board] Approval." 63

These classes were well attended and they fulfilled an important function since after the demise of the Catholic Worker, the only Labor schools operating in Chicago belonged to the Communists. Like the Communists, the CLA also used their classrooms for propaganda purposes. They indoctrinated workers on issues regarding racial and social injustice and these schools became the intellectual stimulus for a wave of Catholic social action in the


63 "Adult Education Center," Fall, 1944. Pamphlet in CCWL Files, Box 1.
forties and fifties. 64

Due to the publicity generated by the classes and the newspaper the offices of Work became a community organizing center. In a pamphlet which described the day to day occurrences around the offices of Work, Bob Sensor, an associate of Marciniak's, included the following:

A high school student calls, "In class everybody put down unions. Is there something positive I could say?"--the next day dozens of pamphlets will be sent to her.

A Union Member kicked out of a union for committing a crime wants help to appeal to the International for readmission.

A local parish wants someone to address their Holy Name Society--an Alliance member will go and give a talk on the Church and Labor. 65

Although many people were responsible for the Catholic Labor Alliance, the paper Work remained the brain-child of Marciniak. In a report entitled "Five Years of Work" Thomas Gavagan stated that Marciniak "sets the policy for Work, he alone is responsible for it. Although he

64 The Catholic Labor Alliance eventually took over the Sheil School of Social Studies and renamed it the Adult Education Center. Andrew Greeley, The Catholic Experience (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 262. In the first edition of Work, Marciniak in a "Statement of Aims of the CLA" stated, "Labor education is important in Chicago--outside of the Communist schools they are non-existent."

65 Pamphlet in CCWL Files, Box 1.
receives suggestions from members of the Alliance, they are usually concerned with matters of emphasis and coverage rather than policy."§66

Since the worker remained "unprotected . . . [with] little or no access to the press or radio . . . ," Marciniak wanted the paper to remain primarily a labor paper. "We plan," he stated, "to reach the rank and file worker and bring the rights of workers to those whom a union paper, even if one existed, would not reach."§67 The publication of Work and its distribution outside factories throughout the Chicago area aided tremendously in union organizing drives. The president of the Chicago Federation of Labor asserted that Work had been "instrumental in pointing out the good points of labor" to workers who would otherwise have remained uninformed.§68

In addition to becoming an advocate of the worker, Marciniak, as he and Cogley had tried to do in the Catholic Worker, attempted to influence the laborer and raise him above prejudices nurtured by ignorance. Every publication


§67 Work, July, 1943.

§68 Gavagan, "Five Years of Work," p. 15.
of Work contained articles dealing with racism, anti-Semitism, or other issues regarding social injustices to which uneducated workers frequently contributed. Because of its editorial emphasis, Work was read by, and also became a forum for Catholic priests, intellectuals, and others involved in the cause of social justice. Despite the local flavor of many of its stories, Work, as the Chicago Catholic Worker before it, became a national publication with three times the circulation of the Chicago Catholic Worker.  

As he had while a member of the Catholic Worker, Marciniak took a strong stand against racism. In Work he condemned the Park Manor Investment Association and led the fight against its "united effort to keep Negroes out of the community." Marciniak's influence in the city was growing, and as it did he tried to temper the city with his ideals. Long before it became a legal matter, he told his fellow citizens that it was a "moral question whether there

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69 In the late forties the circulation of Work was over 15,000. According to Gavagan, Work subscribers fall into three categories: trade union members, priests, people interested in social and economic issues (i.e., College students and teachers).

70 Work, August, 1944; see also: Chicago Sun, August 14, 1944.
may be any general policy in a community to keep people from getting homes simply because of their race." 71

In order to educate his fellow Catholics and to enlist the influence of the Church on the side of racial justice, Marciniak worked for the organization of a Catholic Interracial Council. This dream, which had begun with the interracial hearings sponsored by the Catholic Worker in the thirties, became a reality in 1944 when a Catholic Interracial Council was finally formed. 72

Marciniak, who in the late thirties had been chairman of the "Committee of Catholics Opposed to Anti-Semitism" in the Chicago area, continued to fight this disease still afflicting the city. In one issue of Work, he warned readers against a new group in Chicago calling itself the "Gentile Cooperative Association" which was "an

71 Ibid.

72 This council which was organized in 1944 held forums and provided speakers in order to help fight racism in the city of Chicago. In addition they annually awarded fifty scholarships to Black students so they could attend Catholic Schools. In the mid-fifties Sargent Shriver was president of this organization, and Marciniak was a close associate. In the late fifties this council moved from education to direct confrontation. According to William Osborne, in 1961 the CIC "was the key factor in the peaceful integration of a Negro Catholic family into suburban Skokie." The council also lobbied for fair housing legislation, participated in the "wade-in at Rainbow Beach,
anti-Jewish organization under a pro-Gentile cloak." He advised Catholics especially to keep away from the group since it had been "making a play for Catholic support." He pointed out that this particular brand of anti-Semitism was more dangerous than the more blatant groups, "since their clever pro-Gentile cover may ensnare uninformed and unsuspecting citizens." In another issue of Work he condemned what he described as "subtle methods of job discrimination against Jews."

In order to help alleviate the problem which he frequently reported, Marciniak aligned the CLA with the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League. He promised the head of the League that the CLA would lend its influence to the


73 Work, November, 1944.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., October, 1944.
Jewish cause. The Alliance became instrumental in opening communications between Catholic and Jewish groups.\textsuperscript{76} The CLA also provided speakers to Catholic groups urging them to reject the simplistic and erroneous explanations given by anti-Semitic speakers who traced all the world's problems to Israel.\textsuperscript{77} Marciniak promised the head of the anti-Defamation League to use his paper, \textit{Work}, to refute attacks frequently appearing in other papers, such as the 'Tribune's recent assertion that the League was an American gestapo.'\textsuperscript{78}

The cause of racial and social justice was still a difficult and unrewarding goal to pursue in Chicago in the forties and fifties and Marciniak was branded a troublemaker and a Communist not only outside but within his Church. One reader advised Marciniak that almost every Sunday the pastor of his Church condemned the policies of \textit{Work} from the pulpit. "The cause of today's trouble and unrest," the priest told his congregation was "the fact

\textsuperscript{76}Edward Marciniak to Richard Gutstadt, President, Anti Defamation League, September 22, 1944, CCWL File, Box 1. This letter outlined program to be undertaken by CLA in cooperation with the Anti Defamation League.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid.
that we are going against God."\textsuperscript{79} The priest asserted that "God decreed the segregation of the races but man had gone against this..." He condemned the editor of \textit{Work} and others like him who were "trying to make the rest of us suffer from a malodorous, filthy, thieving, race."\textsuperscript{80}

Elizabeth Dilling, who headed a quasi-fascist group with the dubious name of "Patriotic Research Bureau," declared that the editor of \textit{Work} had proven himself to be a Communist by "upholding the Red-backed CIO...", editorially opposing a ban on the Communist party...\textsuperscript{81}, and praising socialist cooperatives..."

But Marciniak also began to receive important support and recognition in those days. The Rosenwald Foundation which usually contributed funds only for Negro education in the South awarded a grant to the Catholic Labor Alliance for its work in educating workers in an attempt to establish racial harmony in Chicago. The administrators of the fund stated that because of the Alliance's "excellent work" the foundation "stepped out of 

\textsuperscript{79}Joseph Patterson to "Editor," February 16, 1945, CCWL File, Box 1.

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{81}Gavagan, "Five Years of \textit{Work}," p. 14.
its usual policy in making a contribution.\textsuperscript{82}

Dorothy Day came to Chicago and spoke at the Alliance's Labor School, and when she returned to New York she reported her trip in the Catholic Worker, praising Marciniak for the project he had started. Pointing out that Marciniak had been one of the original founders of the Catholic Worker movement in Chicago, she urged her readers to subscribe to his new publication.\textsuperscript{83}

From an army-air force base John Cogley wrote to Marciniak and congratulated him on his new venture. He also asked if he could contribute an article to the new publication.\textsuperscript{84} Marciniak enlisted the literary skill of his old ally, and in September, 1943 Cogley began to contribute a column entitled "Notes Along the Way." In it he attacked the segregation policies of most of Chicago's Catholic institutions, and wrote eloquent arguments against anti-Semitism.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{82}Moly, "The CLA," p. 28.

\textsuperscript{83}Catholic Worker (New York), November, 1944.

\textsuperscript{84}Cogley's letter to Marciniak is not in the CLA files but in a copy of a letter from Marciniak to Cogley, August 15, 1943, the good wishes from Cogley as well as his request to write an article are acknowledged.

\textsuperscript{85}For example, see Work, September, 1943; October,
Cogley also wrote a column under the pseudonym Corporal John Draftee which dealt primarily with his view of the postwar world. "Peace is not merely the absence of war," he wrote, but rather it is a "normalization of relationships between God and Man" and "between man and man." When he dreamt of peace, he stated, he thought of what "St. Augustine called the 'tranquility of order,' peace cannot be legislated or decreed at a round table," he concluded. "It is the fruit of justice."86

Marciniak maintained his own view of peace in the paper also. He told Cogley that "other members of the CLA were one hundred per cent behind the war and we don't see eye to eye on the issue." But he stayed with them because "in the greater view of things we are of one mind."87 Although he had complete control of the editorial policies of the paper, he did not burden it with his views on war. He knew what that issue had done to the New York Catholic Worker. But in subtle ways he did explain his conscientious objection to war. In December, 1944, when the issue

1944; March, 1945; September, 1945.

86 Work, September, 1943.

87 Marciniak to Cogley, August 15, 1943, CCWL File, Box 1.
of peacetime conscription was being discussed. Marciniak called it "dangerous because it put undue emphasis on military might to solve world problems. . . . International peace would only come," he asserted, "when it is founded on law and justice. To place our hopes for peace in the military is to destroy any chance of securing harmony and peace among men."88

Although he had rejected conscription, Marciniak had discovered a way to work for peace. And through Work he found a way to pursue the goals which he had first outlined for himself as a member of the Catholic Worker. Although the war had fragmented the movement, the idealism which spawned it remained, and through the C.O.'s at the Alexian hospital and the work of Marciniak reminders of the Catholic Worker existed.

88Work, December, 1944.
CHAPTER VII

THE POST WAR YEARS

When the war ended those who had begun the Chicago Catholic Worker on Blue Island Avenue did not go back to their interrupted work. Most of the former Chicago Catholic Workers ventured into other forms of Catholic social action and journalism. But they carried the same ideals into their new vocations that they held with their former, and despite its post-war dormancy, the Chicago Worker still maintained an influence on Catholic thought.

Although the war had ended it did not bring peace. The explosions in London, Dresden, Tokyo, and Hiroshima had reverberated across the oceans and shaken America also. The world which American soldiers had fought to defend had been transformed and was barely recognizable on their return. Values and ideas had altered rapidly during the war years, and the perplexed soldier could waste little time evaluating these changes. All his energy was spent trying to absorb them.
Despite the convolutions around him, John Cogley recalled the war years as the most uneventful period of his life. "It was a flop," he later wrote. "For all my vigorous anti-Nazism, I did almost nothing to defeat Hitler. Throughout the war I remained in army air force stations in the United States . . . in utter safety and comparative comfort."¹ As most Americans, he spent a good deal of his time dreaming of peace and the life he would create for himself when the war ended.

For Cogley, "returning to the Catholic Worker seemed out of the question." His family had grown during the war years to include a little boy and girl, and he had seen "too many families undergo unbearable strains due to their attempts to combine the routine of the Catholic Worker with family life."² However, he could not ignore the influence the Catholic Worker had on his life. Eventually he decided to start a publication which had a Catholic Worker slant. He shared his idea with Jim O'Gara, a former ally on Blue Island Avenue. O'Gara had run the house of hospitality for a while and had been co-editor of


²Ibid., pp. 36-37.
the Chicago Catholic Worker during its last year of publication.³

O'Gara liked the idea, and the two men spent their last year in the service planning for the new publication. They foresaw a journal which would be an "up to the minute review of secular affairs as they affected the Catholic community." Cogley later wrote they envisioned "a kind of general version of the Chicago Catholic Worker."⁴

When both men returned to Chicago they were ready to implement their plan. As Cogley recalled, success seemed inevitable: "We were young and optimistic and we already had some experience." All they needed were "the funds to get the venture off the ground."⁵ The best source of wealth they knew was Father H. A. Reinhold, a German refugee who had supported the Catholic Worker enthusiastically until the pacifist issue seemed to overshadow all others. From his parish in Seattle, Reinhold had become a well-known Catholic writer and the leading theorist on Church liturgy in the country.⁶

³Ibid., p. 37; also: personal interview with Jim O'Gara, New York City, June 22, 1976.
⁴Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 37. ⁵Ibid., p. 38.
⁶Rodger Van Allen, The Commonweal and American
Reinhold had supported the Chicago Catholic Worker even after his split from the New York movement, and continued to distribute the Chicago paper in Seattle until it ceased publication. 7 When Cogley and O'Gara visited the priest with their plan for a new publication he was glad to lend his support. Through a wealthy friend the priest secured a donation of a thousand dollars which served as seed money for the new project. 8 With this gift Cogley and O'Gara left for New York to meet "Father Reinhold's really rich friends for more funds." 9

In New York they visited townhouses, Wall Street offices, and in general saw wealth "on a scale to which they were not accustomed." 10 While visiting one place O'Gara remembered being told, "Tomorrow we're going to


8 Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 37; Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 106.

9 Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 37; Cogley's italics

10 Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 106; O'Gara interview.
take you to where the real Catholic money is." But then came the warnings, "Downplay your interest in the racial question" and "be careful not to appear too pro-labor, or too liberal." Disconcerted, but nevertheless willing, the two men proceeded to meet the "real wealth" of American Catholicism. But, as Cogley remembered, "We kept giving the wrong answers about racist practices, union organizations, and the social effects of our commitment to Roman Catholicism." They left New York with their ideals intact, but their funds exhausted.

On returning to Chicago they related their experience to Father Martin Carrabine, an old friend of the Catholic Worker movement. Carrabine suggested that they alter the form of their proposed journal and publish it under the auspices of CISCA (Chicago Interstudent Catholic Action) which he still directed. He promised to give them complete editorial freedom and they accepted his offer. With money from CISCA and a few rich Catholics that Carrabine knew, O'Gara and Cogley began their publication

11 Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 106.
12 Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 37; O'Gara interview.
13 Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 37.
The magazine was supposed to be for Catholic high school students but its content was intended for a wider audience. "It seemed to some of our readers," Cogley later wrote, "that we were shockingly contemporary and youthfully impious." In Today they took up "social crusades" and "wars against sentimentality in religion" as well as "satiric attacks on advertising, book clubs, television, and other popular pre-occupations."  

For three years Cogley and O'Gara published this magazine monthly, and when they left it was well on its way to becoming an important national Catholic magazine.

In 1948 Cogley completed his college education which he had begun a decade earlier, and he left Chicago to study Thomistic philosophy at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. Shortly after Cogley's departure O'Gara also left the magazine to do graduate work in

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 38.
16 Today has since been moved to South Bend where it is now a national publication of the University of Notre Dame.
17 Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 39.
sociology at Loyola University of Chicago. During this time, in order to augment their income from the G.I. Bill, O'Gara and Cogley both began writing articles for Commonweal and America, the two leading Catholic journals at the time.

O'Gara's articles dealt primarily with Chicago. In addition to comments on the city's political situation he reported the social condition of the Church in Chicago. He wrote about skid row, an area he had known intimately while with the Catholic Worker, and he commented on the lack of Catholics in the area performing works of mercy. He also reported the new life which was emerging in the Church in Chicago, most of which came from those involved with the old Catholic Worker movement.

In an article on the Sheil School of Social Studies, he told readers of America that the "school had

18 Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 107; O'Gara interview.
19 O'Gara interview.
over two thousand students, ninety-five courses," and distinguished lecturers such as union leader Walter Reuther, and noted Catholic writers Donald Attwater and J. F. Powers. Sheil School had become a place, O'Gara commented, "where Catholics can meet, exchange ideas, and acquire new ones." 21

O'Gara established a reputation as a good journalist, and after leaving Loyola he was asked to become editor of St. Jude Messenger in order to revive it. Under his direction this magazine was transformed from an overly pietistic Catholic family magazine into an up to date journal which dealt with secular affairs and their relation to Catholics. 22

In 1949 Cogley returned from Europe and Commonweal editor, Ed Skillin, offered him a position on the editorial staff. In addition to knowing Cogley through his articles for Commonweal, he was familiar with the Chicago Catholic Worker, and had visited the Blue Island Avenue house frequently on his excursions to Chicago. 23 Cogley


22 O'Gara interview; Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 107.

23 Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 107; Cogley,
first became feature editor and when he was promoted to executive editor in 1952 he invited O'Gara to New York to become the managing editor of *Commonweal*.24

According to *Commonweal* historian Rodger Van Allen, the appearance of the two ex-Catholic Workers "marked the emergence of a grassroots intellectuality for American Catholics and a discernibly new development in *Commonweal*'s history."25 During this period *Commonweal* became a forum for a small but growing minority within the Church, "Catholic eggheads" as Cogley described them.26

Like their non-Catholic counterparts, this group believed that the Church's institutions, just as the government's, were being held captive by purveyors of reactionism. But they affirmed that inherent in Canon law, just as in the Constitution, a spirit of progress and liberty existed which needed to be expressed. Therefore, when a group of Catholics picketed the Metropolitan Opera House because a priest was shown in a bad light, the editors of *Commonweal*

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24Van Allen, *Commonweal*, p. 107; O'Gara interview.


stated that the protest was not merely silly, but represented a perversion of the true meaning of Catholicism, since the Church had always put heavy emphasis on the arts in its teachings.27

With Cogley and O'Gara at the helm, Commonweal reflected and also attracted ideas which had been characteristically part of the Catholic Worker movement. They covered issues such as liturgical reform, Catholics and social reform, and Catholics in labor unions. As David O'Brien has pointed out, in the 1950's "Cogley's Commonweal" was "regarded accurately as a truly radical voice within the Church. . . ."28 According to Cogley, the editors attempted to "take those values which are American values--e.g., civil liberties, the Bill of Rights, the separation of Church and State--and . . . offer a rationale for them which would be comfortable to Catholic doctrine."29

Although their contemporaries described them as

27 Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 48.


radical, the Commonweal editors were, by Cogley's own admission, decidedly more in line with the traditional liberal camp than with the radical. Unlike the Catholic Worker they accepted basic American institutions. For instance, they supported Stevenson in the 1952 election when the Catholic Worker avoided such issues. They also accepted American intervention abroad as a fact of modern life whereas the Catholic Worker remained strongly pacifist.

But Cogley never criticized Catholic Worker positions; in fact he, probably more than most journalists at the time, understood the basis of Catholic Worker point of view. Writing on the pacifist issue in 1953 he stated, "Please God that there will always be pacifists around to ask them [questions]. The witness of the pacifists bespeaks doubts that otherwise might be silenced by the rest of us, and without doubts I think we are all lost."30

He wrote his article on pacifism to an American public which had purchased over three million copies of Mickey Spillane's One Lonely Night.31 The hero of the


31Erik Goldman, The Crucial Decade (New York:
novel, Mike Hammer, bragged, "I killed more people tonight than I have fingers on my hands. I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every moment of it. . . . They were commies Lee. They were red sons of bitches who should have died long ago. . . . They never thought that there were people like me in this country. They figured us all to be soft as horse manure and just as stupid." 32

The most important campaign that Commonweal took up while Cogley headed the magazine was an editorial campaign against Joseph McCarthy. The war, the bomb, Communism, and Arnold Toynbee told Americans what many of them had suspected all along. Their civilization was crumbling. Materially the average American was more comfortable than he had ever been. Fred Vinson, director of war mobilization and reconversion, reported that "the American people are in the pleasant predicament of having to learn to live fifty percent better than they have ever lived before." 33

Nevertheless something was missing. In Cleveland, Louis B. Seltzer lamented in an editorial, "We have

32 Mickey Spillane, One Lonely Night, cited in Goldman, Crucial Decade, p. 211.
everything. We are on the average, rich beyond the kings of old . . . yet . . . something is not there that should be--something we once had."34

In vain, Americans searched for the idea, the myth, which guides civilizations. As waves on a shoreline, ideas and heroes rose and quickly fell in the America of the early fifties. Most would-be saviors passed harmlessly. McArthur faded noisily, but nevertheless he faded. For awhile religion came into vogue (even Mickey Spillane joined a church). The most dangerous of all these fads occurred when mediocrity and Americanism became a cult and Joseph McCarthy led the campaign against those who would not join.

As he had done a decade and a half earlier against Coughlin, Cogley now launched an attack against McCarthyism, while most journals remained timid observers of the phenomenon. In June, 1950 the Commonweal, in a lead editorial, referred to McCarthy as a "reckless irresponsible bogey man."35 This began a four year campaign against the Senator, during which John Cogley became, according to one

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35Ibid.
historian, "the most articulate anti-McCarthy Catholic in the country." 36

Aside from the Catholic Worker, Commonweal was the only major Catholic journal to oppose McCarthy consistently. 37 At his high point in early 1954, a Gallup poll reported that 58 percent of the Catholics in the country supported McCarthy. 38 This represented a good proportion but it did not match the degree to which the Catholic press supported the Senator.

Historically the Catholic press has always felt compelled to convince skeptics that Catholicism and Americanism were completely compatible. When the McCarthy issue first emerged the Catholic press viewed it as a gold mine of propaganda. What better proof of Americanism was there in the early fifties than anti-Communism? Catholic editors were quick to point out that their Church had been consistently opposed to Communism when the "evil" first emerged in the nineteenth century. Catholics had even condemned

36 Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 111.

37 Cogley, Catholic America, p. 112.

38 Poll cited in Cogley, Catholic America, p. 112. Protestant support for McCarthy reached 49 percent at its highest point.
it when many in this country had been duped into becoming "fellow travelers." 39

The Catholic magazine Sign stated that McCarthy had "stumbled upon the Leftist nest in a speech . . . and ever since has doggedly tried to carry through the unmasking of Leftists in the State Department." 40 Ave Maria magazine complimented McCarthy for fighting Communism "the way you fight rattlesnakes; without a rulebook." 41 The Brooklyn Tablet, which had supported Coughlin a decade earlier, frequently published letters praising McCarthy. One enthusiast wrote, "McCarthyism to me is one hundred percent anti-Communism; I glory in my McCarthyism." 42

As he had done in the Chicago Catholic Worker Cogley condemned this crude form of anti-Communism. Communism was too dynamic, he warned, to be thwarted by ravings, speeches, and meetings. But Christianity, he suggested to his Catholic readers, was also dynamic. The failure of anti-Communism among Catholics, he maintained, was that

39 Cogley, Catholic America, p. 113.


42 Brooklyn Tablet, August 30, 1952.
they "gave too much to the anti-Communist crusade and not enough to Christianity." But few were willing to accept Cogley's interpretation of Christianity, which meant concern for the poor, opposition to segregation, and support for the oppressed in general. Catholics, as well as most other Americans in the fifties, were enjoying a newly discovered affluence, and social problems remained far from their mind.

The greatest contribution Cogley made to the anti-McCarthy campaign was the speech he wrote for his old friend Bishop Bernard Sheil of Chicago. Sheil was the only member of the Catholic hierarchy to condemn the Wisconsin Senator. During the same week that Cardinal Spellman of New York had shaken McCarthy's hand and praised him for his anti-Communism, Sheil told twenty-five hundred auto workers that the time had come to cry out "against the phony anti-Communism that flouts our traditions, and democratic procedures, and sense of fair play." True anti-Communism,

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44 Cogley, Catholic America, pp. 113-14.
45 Ibid., p. 112; see also: Cogley, Canterbury Tale, p. 46.
Sheil asserted, meant being "interested in such matters as seeing to it that people get enough to eat, have decent homes, and are able to raise their children in dignity."  

Cogley's and Commonweal's efforts did not go unnoticed by McCarthy. "I feel that you have done, and are doing a tremendous disservice to the Catholic Church," McCarthy told the editors of Commonweal in 1953. He told them that a magazine such as theirs "which falsely and dishonestly masquerades under the title of being a mouthpiece for the Catholic Church can perform unlimited service to the Communist movement."  

Commonweal's response to McCarthy had already appeared a year earlier when O'Gara editorialized, "I am pleased that Commonweal is included on the roster of Senator McCarthy's opponents."  

Together the former Catholic Workers from Chicago, Cogley and O'Gara, set the tone for Commonweal and it became, as David O'Brien has pointed out, the leader of "Catholic liberalism and the voice of the educated,

46 Van Allen, Commonweal, p. 114.


articulate Americanized Catholic layman." 49

While pursuing their new vocation after the war, Cogley and O'Gara, both leaders in the early Catholic Worker movement in Chicago, maintained at least intellectually their close connection with the movement. Shortly before joining the staff at Commonweal, Cogley wrote an article for the New York Catholic Worker on its fifteenth anniversary. "Because I was one of the thousands who were profoundly affected by the Catholic Worker, because it has meant so much to me in my own life and work," he felt that to try to ascertain what the "movement and its leaders have meant to the Church in America" found him "deeply stirred and anxious to express gratitude to the Providence which directed them."

When Cogley began writing for Commonweal, the Catholic Worker had been in existence for fifteen years. But its impact on American Catholicism was just beginning to be felt. The graduates of the movement's first generation were just starting to introduce the basic ideals of the Catholic Worker to a larger cross section of the country. In 1952, Dwight McDonald noted that "many individuals

49 O'Brien, American Catholicism, p. 160.
who are now working in . . . strange Catholic vineyards were given their first impulse and their training in the Catholic Worker movement." 50 One example of McDonald's observation was the work Cogley and O'Gara were doing at Commonweal, as they transformed the journal into an intellectual offshoot of the Catholic Worker. 51

In actuality, however, they had left the Catholic Worker. Despite their intellectual allegiance they no longer lived in voluntary poverty, sheltering the homeless and feeding the hungry. Another Chicagoan, Tom Sullivan, did. In 1938, shortly after their friend Al Reser had married, Cogley, Sullivan, and a few others at the Catholic Worker stood outside the house on Blue Island Avenue and discussed the possibility of their own marriages and what type of girls they might choose. Sullivan spread his arms


51 Commonweal was one of many Catholic journals influenced by the Catholic Worker, as William Miller has pointed out, "For Catholics the time just after the war was one of seeming progress. . . . The relationship of the Worker movement to this new spirit of confidence . . . was indicated in part by the new publications begun by persons associated with the movement." Among those were, "Work . . . Today . . . and Integrity." Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 217.
toward the old Catholic Worker house and exclaimed, "This shall be my bride!" 52

His assertion in a moment of levity proved close to the truth. After the war he visited Dorothy Day in New York City. He planned a short visit, but he stayed almost ten years, the longest anyone has ever managed the New York Worker house. He told a reporter a few years later, "The place was a mess, of course I had to pitch in and clean it up. After that I was hooked." 53

The Catholic Worker house had undergone a great transformation. It was but a skeleton of the vibrant movement it had been. The house was occupied solely by the indigent; there were few idealists in the early fifties anxious to share ideas or seek support for their radical crusades. In 1948 John Cogley had spoken of the movement in terms of the past. "Now there are only seven or eight houses left," he wrote in America. 54 In response, Dorothy Day commented, "Yes the problems have become

52 Personal interview, Tom Sullivan, Rockville Centre, New York, June 24, 1976.


intensified a great many have left the running." She admitted that "where there were thirty-two houses and farms, now there are eleven." But she pointed out, "In those eleven we are still trying to work out a theory of love so that the revolution of love instead of hate may come about." 55

House counting was not the basis on which the movement should be judged. John Cogley wrote many years later that it disturbed Dorothy Day that the charitable work of the movement was taken more seriously than the ideas presented in the paper. 56 The thought escaped most people that the works of mercy performed at the Catholic Worker House were a reflection of the ideas which the movement professed.

It was a good time for Sullivan to move into the house of hospitality in New York. His humor and wit was probably a good antidote for what were trying times. One of his favorite pastimes when he was not warding off bill collectors was challenging pacifists who congregated at the house. "There I was for years in the Pacific fighting

55 Catholic Worker (New York), September, 1948.
to protect you lousy C.O.'s," he used to complain. 57

Dorothy Day recalled that these arguments started as harmless banter but often degenerated into "quiet but venomous words." 58

Sullivan wrote a column for the Catholic Worker entitled "Mott Street." This column became "Chrystie Street" when the Catholic Worker house moved there in 1950. He reported day by day occurrences around the house in such a manner as to make people believe that there was a quiet joy in voluntary poverty. "We had a . . . dignified lady join us for dinner one night," he told readers. After she ate she announced to the kitchen help, 'I am not thanking you bums for a bit of the meal that I just ate.' Pointing to a crucifix on the kitchen wall she declared, 'I am thanking the man on the cross.' 59

Aside from the ever-present poor there were few visitors to the Catholic Worker in the late forties and early fifties.

The group that had come to the Worker movement in


59 Catholic Worker (New York), October, 1952.
the thirties were in many ways typical of their generation and its problems. The small group that came in the fifties however were misfits. They remained unimpressed with their country's newly acquired affluence. And their troubling over the bomb went deeper than the fear that it might be dropped on their country. They did not like the Communists either, not because of McCarthy's ravings but because of events such as the Stalin-Hitler pact and the murder of Trotsky.

Typical of this new group was Michael Harrington. After working on a magazine for a while in Greenwich Village, he visited the Catholic Worker house and moved in. Sullivan recalled the first day he met Harrington. He invited the young man to help wrap the paper for mailing. Harrington moved into the Worker house where he wrote for the paper and helped on the soupline for over two years. In the introduction to his book The Other America, he wrote, "It was through Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement that I first came into contact with the terrible reality of involuntary poverty and the magnificent idea of voluntary poverty."60

Other members of the small community of radicals remaining in the country also visited the Catholic Worker house. Dwight McDonald visited frequently in 1952 and became convinced that the Catholic Worker would provide a good topic for a book or at least a series of articles. He received an advance for the project from the New Yorker, and Sullivan became suspicious. He vented his feelings in his column of the Catholic Worker. He was concerned about what the New Yorker could do to a person or an institution. A native Chicagoan, Sullivan recalled what the New Yorker had done to his hometown. After they finished tearing down Chicago he commented, "I got the impression that there was less left than there was after the Chicago fire." But when McDonald's series of articles appeared in the New Yorker even Sullivan had to admit that "they were pretty fair pieces of writing."  

Many readers of the Catholic Worker were not as pleased. One person felt it was a terrible mistake for the Catholic Worker to become involved with a magazine that was such "an outstanding source of nourishment to the

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61 Catholic Worker (New York), October, 1952.  
bourgeois mind." But no one would abandon the Worker over such a trivial issue; there were so few places to go.63

In 1953, the flames which McCarthy and others had been fanning burst into one gigantic explosion. A series of events which began with the arrest of a scientist in England rapidly centered around a Jewish television repairman and his wife. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed by the United States government as traitors. Dorothy Day recalled the day, June 19, 1953, that the Rosenbergs walked to the death chamber. "That June evening the air was fresh with honeysuckle. Out under the hedge . . . the black cat played with a grass snake, and the newly cut grass was fragrant in the evening air." She noted that Ethel Rosenberg's last gesture was to kiss one of the police matrons who accompanied her to the death chair. "Her last gesture was a gesture of love," she wrote. "Let us have no part in the vindictive state and let us pray for Ethel and Julius Rosenberg."64

These were hard times for those who did not glory

63Miller, Harsh and Dreadful Love, p. 240.
64Ibid., pp. 234-35.
in the prospect of being an average American. In Chicago, however, Ed Marciniak had fared better than most reformers. He continued to publish *Work* and in the fifties it became one of the most important labor papers in the country. 65 His work as a spokesman for labor won for him a position on the delegation representing the workers of the United States at the Forty-Third International Labor Conference at Geneva, Switzerland. Monsignor George Higgins, who had succeeded John Ryan as head of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, praised the selection of Marciniak. He called the appointment appropriate since "there were few labor leaders and few American Catholic social actionists who have done more than he to popularize the philosophy underlying" the goals of the convention. 66

Although his main concern remained the cause of labor, as always he involved himself in other issues which troubled his sense of social justice. During the fifties Marciniak became vice president of the Newspaper Guild, a


66 N.C.W.C. news release, June 27, 1959, Marciniak's private papers.
board member of the housing conference in Chicago, a member of the Catholic Interracial Council, the Chicago Council against Discrimination, and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. In 1960 when he was appointed director of the Commission on Human Relations the congratulatory letters he received read like a history of the work he had done, and the organizations he had aided in the city for the previous two decades. Among others, letters of congratulation came from B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, The Chicago Defender, and the Chicago Interracial Council.

When asked if his lofty position would become more of a handicap than an asset in his quest for social justice, Marciniak replied, "I think I am the same guy playing a different role. It's the nature of the political process that you engage in a sort of give and take to get things done. But let me emphasize, that this way you do get things done." He probably spoke for a great number of people.

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68 Letters in Marciniak's private papers.

of former Catholic Workers who had been touched by the idealism of the Worker movement, and then carried these ideals with them into other fields of action.

Dorothy Day stated that working with the Catholic Worker gave many young men a springboard for professional work in their chosen field. "Social work, editing, labor organizing, and politics, teaching, writing, nursing—in all these fields," she pointed out, "there are Catholic Workers or former Catholic Workers...." This assertion was especially true of those men who had started the Chicago Catholic Worker. Some like Marciniak, Cogley, and O'Gara had become famous. Others like Marty Paul, who re-established his farm commune after the war, were not so well-known. Nevertheless all remained committed to the ideals they had outlined for themselves during the latter part of the Depression on Blue Island Avenue.

The Catholic Worker idea lived on, but in Chicago the movement itself was all but non-existent. All that remained was the original house on Taylor Street, the place where Marciniak, Cogley, and the other Catholic Workers had first discussed and discovered the movement.

70Day, Loaves and Fishes, p. 132.
The Taylor Street house was but a remnant of the vibrant pre-war days. John Bowers had kept the house going long after everyone had departed. He transformed the house into a neighborhood gathering place for the local children. The brash man in dandified dress who had shocked many with his flippant remarks was now a quiet man in worn-out clothes, indistinguishable from those he helped. John Bowers spent his last days surrounded in cobwebs and dust, and his tattered condition symbolized the passing of an age.

In January, 1950 John Bowers died and with him passed all evidence of a once vibrant movement. Tom Sullivan wrote Bower's obituary in the Catholic Worker relating the work he had done in Chicago to readers throughout the country. Dorothy Day travelled to Chicago for his funeral and remarked in the Catholic Worker, "I remember something he did for me years ago when I was taken ill in Chicago and he paid not only for my hospital bill . . . but for the operation on my throat. . . . He was a man of taste and culture," she wrote. "May God grant him a place of refreshment, light and peace." 71

71 Catholic Worker (New York), January, 1950.
Shortly after his death another group began a Catholic Worker house in Chicago. "Our house is located slightly south of the Loop," Fred O'Connell wrote to Dorothy Day. He told her that they slept thirty men every night and every day they took a truckload of food down to Madison Avenue. "Ten gallons of soup and all the bread the men want," he wrote. Their efforts seemed miniscule compared to what the Chicago Catholic Worker had been. But those in the movement never attempted to measure their success. And in a few years important voices would once again emerge from the Chicago Catholic Worker.

72 Ibid., June, 1950.
CHAPTER VIII

KARL MEYER

In the late fifties, another generation of Catholic Workers emerged in Chicago under the direction of Karl Meyer. Meyer, born in 1937, belonged to a generation which historians and sociologists have called complacent, apathetic and "other directed." But Meyer did not share the aspirations of his contemporaries and remained unaffected by the forms which guided their lives.

For the few radicals that remained in the fifties the overwhelming issue was pacifism. Although in some minds the Second World War and the Cold War which followed made pacifism a necessary alternative in international relations, these two events actually buried the peace movement. In 1951 Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas saw the "prevalence of the belief that full scale war is

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inevitable. Many men of good will," he pointed out, "have lost hope for any solution short of war." After a trip across the country for the War Resisters League in 1950, Igal Roodenko reported, "I've begun to feel at this point, simply to get people to know that the peace movement exists is no mean accomplishment." Roy Kepler, head of the War Resisters League, told his national council that there was no longer a "pacifist movement in the United States." 

The personalist philosophy of the Catholic Worker supported many protestors of the fifties, and Karl Meyer as part of the Worker movement became an example and prophet to an entire generation of radical pacifists. According to one historian, Meyer demonstrated "the possibility of living a whole life dedicated to resistance and social

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6 According to Lawrence Wittner, "Throughout these years [the early fifties] the Catholic Worker served as the center of a unique brand of anarchist pacifism." Wittner, Rebels, p. 225.
transformation."  

At the age of ten Meyer had read Gandhi and when he turned fourteen he told his father that he wanted to travel to Korea and explain to the people there the futility of war. But journeys for peace remained in the future for Karl Meyer. He remembered walking in the Vermont woods near his house and listening to his father explain the hopelessness of such a venture. Meyer's first pacifist impulses were nurtured by his father. William Meyer was a soil conservationist for the National Forest Service and during the Second World War he had been a conscientious objector. Karl Meyer recalled that his father's love for nature and the forests caused him to have a repugnance for war.  

In 1958 when the elder Meyer became the first Democratic Congressman elected from the state of Vermont in over a hundred years, he spearheaded a nuclear disarmament bill for which his constituents quickly removed him from


office in the next election. 9

At seventeen Meyer received a scholarship to the University of Chicago, but he did not remain there long. He was already a pacifist by the time he arrived at college, but he still troubled over the proper means to peace. His short stay at the University of Chicago changed that. While at the birthplace of the atom bomb he most certainly discovered his school's short lived attempts in the late forties and early fifties to promote the world government idea. This proposal had been raised by a number of intellectuals, including Albert Einstein, before it reached the University of Chicago, but the new "Committee to Frame a World Constitution" made the University of Chicago "the stormy center of intellectual rigor and social action on the question of a world community." 10

Despite their sincerity, these would-be peace


10Wittner, Rebels, p. 172. The two key figures in this movement at the University of Chicago were professors Richard McKeon and G. A. Borgese. They urged the university to establish an institute for world government, pointing to the "symbolic fact" that the "University of Chicago played a decisive role in inaugurating the atomic age."
makers came increasingly under the influence of militarists. In 1947 Cord Meyer (no relation to Karl), president of the United World Federalists (U.W.F.), condemned both the Soviet Union's policy in the Balkans and the United States' behavior in China and Greece. "Each competitor," he asserted, "seeks to insure by force that the other does not gain the controlling influence in areas each considers essential to his security." Such national rivalries would always occur, he felt, until each nation accepted a world authority. By the following year, Cord Meyer had retreated from his position. "Until the world federation is established," he stated that "we must maintain our defensive military strength . . . we have to follow a policy of military preparedness. . . ." Apart from a few scattered scientists and old time pacifists such as A. J. Muste, the World Government idea was dead by 1950.

Disillusioned with these attempts at peace and also with the apparent retreat of the intellectuals in the early fifties, Karl Meyer acquired a disdain for what he described as "bourgeois pacifism." In 1959 copying the

11Ibid., p. 174.  
12Ibid., p. 175.  
13Ibid., pp. 176-77.
style of Peter Maurin, he explained his impatience with bourgeois pacifists:

American pacifism is a bourgeois pacifism.

Bourgeois pacifism is a verbal phenomenon.

Its habitat is the atmosphere of outer suburbia and the college campus. 14

American pacifists, he felt, had little "sense of personal responsibility to the poor or for each other, and therefore have little sense of personal responsibility for creating the reality of peace." 15 Even before he discovered the Catholic Worker movement, Karl Meyer had developed a rough idea of personal responsibility and personal non-compliance with what he viewed as a continual war state. He left the University of Chicago and travelled to New York where he hoped to live a life of voluntary poverty which would allow him to live in resistance to the


15 Ibid.
war making powers of the state. He planned to live on less than twelve dollars a week so that he would not have to pay taxes. He rented a room in a poor section of mid-town Manhattan for seven dollars a week, and he lived on a daily diet which included milk, eggs, bread, and an orange. He had read in *The New York Times* that those items contained all the nutrients his body required. Not one for culinary experimentation, he ate these same products every day while he lived in New York.16

His life in New York had little impact on world policy or on the pacifist movement, but to him personal resistance had more significance than thousands of speeches in the name of peace.17 While in New York he worked part time for Barnes and Noble, and in his spare time, he went to the library on Forty-Second Street for entertainment and also to develop his ideas on radical pacifism. He read books by Charles Peguy, Leon Bloy, George Bernanos,

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16Meyer interview.

17As Lawrence Wittner has pointed out, "In the repressive climate of the fifties some pacifists perceived a special virtue in 'resistance' ethos." He quotes A. J. Mustee who asserted that personal resistance was a "necessary and indispensible measure of spiritual self-preservation in a day when the impulse to conform, to acquiesce, to go along is the instrument which is used to subject men to totalitarian rule . . . ." Wittner, *Rebels*, p. 226.
and Dorothy Day. One book which had a particular influence on him was Ammon Hennacy's, The Book of Ammon: Autobiography of a Unique American Rebel.

During the fifties, Hennacy dominated the Catholic Worker movement in New York. He was, as historian William Miller describes, "a native American radical from the Midwest, a Thoreaurian character who was honest and pure, who did all that a brave heart could do to end violence and cruelty." In his younger days Hennacy had come under the influence of Alexander Berkman while both were imprisoned in Atlanta. Berkman was completing his sentence for his ill-fated attack on Henry Frick during the Homestead steel strike, and Hennacy for refusing induction during the First World War. Hennacy's vision, Miller describes as "the paradise of the anarchist, where

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18 One of Meyer's former professors at University of Chicago sent Meyer this reading list after he had written to him explaining the life style he planned for himself. Meyer interview.


21 Hennacy, Autobiography.
oppression, injustice, and violence were all resolved in a community of free men, where no state or church could divide men, organize them one against the other, oppress them and take their lives.  

Hennacy was not only attracted by the anarchist pacifism of the Catholic Worker but also by the fortitude of Dorothy Day and he remained close to the movement throughout the fifties and sixties until his death in 1970.

By his own admission Meyer became quite impressed with Hennacy's account of his life. When a police captain told Hennacy that all anarchists were bomb throwers, Hennacy responded, "The biggest bomb thrower was the government." Meyer had just turned eighteen while reading Hennacy's book and it made him think he too should renounce conscription, but discretion overcame impulse, and he registered as a conscientious objector.

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22 Miller, Catholic Worker Movement, pp. 266-67.

23 In his autobiography Hennacy stated that his attraction for the Catholic Worker movement was for the most part due to his attraction for Dorothy Day. He felt that she had "more integrity about what is worthwhile than any two radicals or Christians I have ever known. . . . If she had been a Quaker or a Mormon I would have been attracted to those religions." Hennacy, Autobiography.


25 Meyer interview.
His reading compelled Meyer to intensify his one-man campaign against war. In 1956 he moved to Washington, D.C., where he hoped to confront the country's leaders with what he viewed as a simple recognizable truth: the futility and suicidal madness of cold war armament. He supported himself by taking a job as a messenger in Dean Acheson's law firm, proving, he later admitted, that "not every anarchist starts out by being perfectly consistent." In his spare time he visited Congressional offices in order to explain his views to the lawmakers. His favorite target was Hubert Humphrey, who at least appeared to have a sympathetic ear for his beliefs.

While in Washington he met a group of young Catholics who ran what they called a "Catholic Friendship house." This group was loosely associated with the Catholic Worker movement in New York and they ran a soup kitchen.

26 Catholic Worker (New York), March, 1962. In this issue Meyer wrote a short autobiography entitled "What Is To Be Done?" He copied this title from Lenin who copied it from the nineteenth century Russian Cernysevskii, a member of the revolutionary intelligentsia. For Cerynsevskii the answer to "what is to be done?" was free workers associations, for Lenin the answer was a revolution carried out by the minority. For Meyer the answer was more houses of hospitality and a personal commitment to problems of the poor.

27 Meyer interview.
where they fed and housed the poor. Meyer, who was raised in a good New England Protestant home, spent much time arguing with these people trying to convince them that their actions were inconsistent with the philosophy of their church. But Meyer soon learned from his association with this group that in addition to fomenting inquisitions, and worshipping idols, the Catholic Church had a tradition of voluntary poverty and pacifism. During his association with this group Meyer became a Catholic. This conversion, he later stated, was not the result of any spiritual insight, but rather a rational affirmation of everything he had previously believed.  

His new commitment led him into the Washington ghetto on 0 Street between Sixth and Seventh where he began his own Catholic house of hospitality.  

Merely nineteen years old at the time, Meyer was the only white person living on the block. Frequently, while walking home at night, a policeman would stop him with a warning to get out of the neighborhood before it got too late. His first venture in helping the poor ended in failure. Several

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29 Catholic Worker (New York), March, 1964.
months had passed and he received no guests. Finally one day in early autumn he discovered a man sleeping on the steps of a church. Loading the man into a cab, he exulted over discovering a lost soul to save. His joy soon turned to utter desperation when he realized that the poor do not always welcome redemption. After three days of fighting a losing battle over the bottle with his inebriated guest, Meyer realized he had failed. Heartbroken and dejected, he surrendered his responsibility to the people at Friendship house who had more experience in such matters.

Ending his experiment in charity, he closed his house on O Street and returned to New York. He was rehired at the book warehouse, and he continued his solitary life of voluntary poverty and tax avoidance.

During his second stay in New York he became a part of the Catholic Worker movement. On a warm summer evening in 1957 while reading the Catholic Worker, he noticed an article by Dorothy Day which condemned air raid drills. She maintained that these drills, which had been going on since 1955, had no purpose whatsoever except for creating a war psychosis.

"Testing the bomb was a contest between man and God," she declared, and the hydrogen bomb was a "symbol of
utter atheism" for it was the final result of equating God with country and with ideology.30 Since 1955, members of the Catholic Worker had been engaging in civil disobedience and resistance to the Civil Defense Act which required everyone to take shelter during the air-raid drills. Dorothy Day recalled that it was "Ammon Hennacy's idea to go to the city parks to distribute literature calling attention to the penance we need to do as the first nation to use nuclear weapons..."31 Pointing out that there could be no shelter against nuclear attacks, Hennacy "dwelt on the duty of civil disobedience in order to call attention to the hideous dangers hanging over the world, ... and our personal responsibility to do something about them." Every year they went into Central Park during the drills and every year they were arrested, but this act was a small one Dorothy Day felt, "compared to the problem confronting the German, for instance, when he was called upon to obey Hitler... Our jail sentences were light," she recalled.32

30Ibid., June, 1957.


32Ibid., pp. 160-161.
This lonely crowd grew larger each year. They were first joined by the War Resisters League, and A. J. Mustee's Fellowship of Reconciliation. In 1957 Karl Meyer joined them. He had many reasons for avoiding the demonstration, not least among them was the renewal of his scholarship at the University of Chicago. Although he realized that an arrest might jeopardize his readmission to school, his radical spirit overcame his temerity. During his lunch break he hurried down to the Catholic Worker house hoping the demonstrators had not yet left.\(^{33}\)

Meyer remembers his awe, walking into the office and seeing people who were heroes to him gathered around a desk at the Catholic Worker house. There was Ammon Hennacy, Dorothy Day, and a few others he did not know. He was much younger than the group of veterans he faced and he sheepishly announced his intention to join them that day. Apparently concerned about his youth, Dorothy Day warned him that they were going to plead guilty when arrested and refuse bail.\(^{34}\)

Meyer had not planned on this. He had convinced himself to go only by deciding to pay bail and plead not

\(^{33}\)Meyer interview. \(^{34}\)Ibid.
guilty. This would allow him time to return to Chicago
and register for classes. The loss of his scholarship
loomed in his mind, but the moral certitude of Dorothy Day
and Ammon Hennacy overwhelmed his fear and he went along
with them. Later that day Meyer suffered the first of
many imprisonments for pacifist activism.

Since he was still a minor, the authorities sent
him to Riker's Island, a juvenile home, while the others
went to the city jail. He joined them the next day in
court and heard Hennacy declare to the judge, "I follow
St. Peter in obeying God rather than man." When the judge
retorted with "render therefore to Caesar the things that
are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's,"
Hennacy responded that these days "too many people render
too much to Caesar and too little to God." 35

35Ibid.; also reported in Greenwich Village Voice, April 29, 1959. These protests which were begun by the Catholic Worker in 1955 had, by 1960, grown to include thousands. That year protestors included writers Nat Henoff, Dwight McDonald, and Norman Mailer. According to Wittner, during the 1960 demonstration the police arrested "twenty-six people, none of them leaders in the action." Wittner, Rebels, p. 265. Karl Meyer recalled that Ammon Hennacy, the man who started the demonstrations five years prior, was frustrated in his attempt to get arrested at the final demonstration. He followed the police around saying, "Arrest me" but the police ignored him. 1960 was the final year for air raid drills in New York City. Meyer inter-
view.
days!" bellowed the judge.

At the end of the summer that witnessed his baptism of fire into radicalism, Meyer returned to Chicago to finish college. Since he exempted two years, he received his degree the following spring in 1958. Later that year he gave the Chicago Catholic Worker a new beginning. Along with a friend, Ed Morin, he rented a storefront at 164 West Oak Street and opened a new house of hospitality. A few years later in an interview with David Mead of the Chicago Daily News he explained what motivated him to undertake such a thankless task. He told the reporter that each person should assume a personal responsibility for social injustice. He also said that the doctrines which converted him from a liberal to a radical were found in the gospels. These were the same responses that an earlier generation of Catholic Workers had given to similar questions.

Forgetting his former failure in Washington, Meyer energetically made plans for his new venture. Upon

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36 Meyer interview.

37 Daily News (Chicago), March 27, 1964. In 1939 John Cogley had made a similar statement, "One real Christian . . . is a terrible danger to the order of society." Catholic Worker (Chicago), January, 1940.
arriving at the grimy store on Oak Street he excitedly talked to friends who had volunteered to help him. He pointed out which rooms would be used for storing clothing, meetings, sleeping, and dining. Others were not as enthusiastic. One volunteer, Karlene Mastek, a Loyola student, declared that the first thing they should do was "set a match to the place and let the contractors start all over again." But she relented, "It was going to be another Catholic Worker house" so she and her friends donated some Pine Sol, DDT and hard work in order to make the place habitable.  

In addition to running a Catholic Worker House, Meyer continued his activity in the peace movement. In April, 1959 along with Ken Caulkins he organized the Student Peace Union. By 1960, this group claimed over five thousand members across the country and had over twelve thousand subscribers to its publication Bulletin. The SPU was the first of many student peace groups which would emerge in the sixties. TOCSIN at Harvard, SLATE at Berkeley, and SDS leaders Paul Booth and Todd Gitlin, all

were influenced by the pacifism of the Student Peace Union.\textsuperscript{39}

According to one historian, Meyer was the "most vigorous advocate of draft resistance in the movement," and he chided other members for their temerity.\textsuperscript{40} He advised protestors that they should undertake "total resistance" to the state. "If we resist only up to the limit of resistance that the state will tolerate," Meyer warned, "we acquiesce in a paradoxical impotence. . . . Protests, petitions, and prudent resistance are essentially worthless to the extent that they are tolerable."\textsuperscript{41} He called his column in the SPU \textit{Bulletin} "Stepping Up The Agitation."\textsuperscript{42}

Meyer's attitude toward the draft had changed drastically since 1955 when he had registered as a Conscientious Objector. He had come to believe that "the non-violent revolution lives in poverty. Its habitat is

\textsuperscript{39}Lynd and Ferber, \textit{The Resistance}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{41}SPU \textit{Bulletin},
\textsuperscript{42}SPU \textit{Bulletin}. 
prison." In January, 1959, he wrote to the draft board and told them that over "the years I have come to the conclusion that I have no obligation to obey the draft act" and that he had in fact an "obligation to resist it to the full extent that it is at all possible." He returned his torn draft card explaining that "it was a good thing to disobey evil laws because it made them weak and ineffective." ^44

The Selective Service responded by warning him that draft card destruction was against the law. In early spring, concluding that renunciation of his C.O. status demonstrated a desire to be reclassified, the draft board sent him a 1-A classification and shortly after that, an induction notice. 46 Meyer returned this notice with a letter stating that he would not report for induction.

Soon after he received the army's greetings Meyer

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43 Student Peace Union Bulletin, March, 1960. As is the case with most American radicals, Meyer received some of his inspiration from Thoreau.

44 Karl Meyer to Selective Service, January 4, 1959, Meyer's private papers.

45 Selective Service to Karl Meyer, February 26, 1959, Meyer's private papers.

46 Ibid., April 31, 1959, Meyer's private papers.
received a different type of invitation in the mail. A. J. Mustee wrote asking him to become a coordinator in an act of civil disobedience against nuclear testing in Omaha, Nebraska. Meyer accepted, and early in the morning on July 1, 1959, after listening to a sermon on peace and the gospel delivered by Muste, he jumped over the fence at the missile testing site at Mead Air Force Base. The aging pacifist Muste needed help getting over the fence and Meyer came to his aid. When an Air Force officer advised them that they were trespassing and subject to arrest, Mustee delivered another sermon on peace. The two men along with another veteran pacifist, Ross Anderson, were arrested.47

On July 7, 1959 the three men appeared in court to answer trespassing charges. All pleaded guilty and the judge sentenced them to a year's probation. One stipulation of their parole demanded that they remain away from the missile base.48 Having made his point and delivering


48Terms of probation included: "The defendant is to remain away from the Mead Ordinance Depot at Mead, Nebraska." The statement concluded, "The Court has placed you on probation, believing that if you sincerely try to obey and live up to the conditions of your probation,
yet another sermon in the courtroom, Muste felt satis-
fied and returned home. Meyer remained.\(^4^9\) On July 10, he
was arrested again for parole violation when he went over
the fence at the missile testing site for a second time.
This time a less patient judge Richard Robinson sentenced
him to six months in a federal penitentiary.\(^5^0\)

While in prison he wrote a pamphlet entitled The
**Non-Violent Revolution** which he later published.\(^5^1\) In it
he developed the connection between voluntary poverty and
pacifism. The bourgeoisie, even bourgeois pacifists, he
maintained, could never support a peace movement, since by
their very existence the middle class supported a system
which thrived on war and preparation for it.\(^5^2\) In his pam-
phlet he proposed a four point program which included
"poverty, pacifism, prison and personalism."\(^5^3\)

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\(^4^9\) United States vs. Karl Meyer, United States Dis-
trict Court for the State of Nebraska, Court Docket #0438,

\(^5^0\) Ibid.

\(^5^1\) Karl Meyer, *The Non-Violent Revolution*.

\(^5^2\) Ibid.

\(^5^3\) Ibid., pp. 2-3.
Sitting in prison in 1959 Meyer could not anticipate the movement which he and others like him were generating. Since only the reality of war would lend credence to his protests, Meyer doubted the impact of actions such as those which had taken place at Omaha. "I am gravely worried about our complete failure," he wrote to Dorothy Day from prison. Many radicals involved in the lonely protests of the fifties took strength from the belief in their own righteousness, but Karl Meyer could not. "What does it profit us," he asked Dorothy Day, "if we gain our own souls and lose the world..." In the critical year ahead," he wrote, "twenty five new radicals must spring up for each of us who have been imprisoned here." Without such a regeneration Meyer feared "the destruction of man" was imminent. 54

As was the case with most radicals at the time, Meyer saw nothing but desolation in the future. There was no room for compromise in Meyer's mind. The only alternative was total opposition to the war-making powers of the state. After serving his six month sentence he

54 Karl Meyer to Dorothy Day, August 16, 1959, Catholic Worker Papers, Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
returned to the Catholic Worker house which his friend Ed Morin had maintained during his absence.

He conducted seminars on peace at the Worker house and also supported his allies in the peace movement. On one occasion, such support caused his imprisonment again. The cause for this incarceration was his involvement in the Eroseanna Robinson case. Miss Robinson, a former track star, was a physical education teacher. She, like Meyer, worked only part time in order to avoid payment of taxes which she feared went toward nuclear armament. When the Internal Revenue Service summoned her to court to explain why she had not filed a tax return, she refused to speak. In response to her silence, the judge ordered her held in contempt of court. Instead of relenting to the court's pressure Miss Robinson began a fast which lasted 115 days.

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55 Among speakers at these sessions were David Dellinger, publisher of Liberation magazine, who in 1968 would be the senior member of the "Chicago 8," and Daniel Berrigan, activist priest in the peace movement of the sixties. Meyer reported on these workshops in the Catholic Worker.

After following the events of this case closely for weeks Meyer, along with the War Resisters League, formed a committee which they called "Friends of Eroseanna Robinson." This group began a twenty-four hour vigil outside the courthouse in support of the tax resistor. Meyer himself ended up in jail for distributing pamphlets on government property. 57

The court's treatment of Meyer in this case involved tactics not usually associated with the American justice system. After reviewing his history, the District Attorney requested the judge to send Meyer to a psychiatrist. When he arrived at the doctor's office Meyer refused to discuss his family, his childhood, or any of the necessary preliminaries. He told the doctor that the examination was an affront to his civil rights and had a doubtful legal basis, since it involved a "fishing expedition" which "might be used against any kind of radical dissent." 58

For refusing to submit to an examination the District Attorney attempted to have Meyer committed to the

57 Copy of warrant in Meyer's private papers.

58 Meyer's account of this incident appears in Catholic Worker (New York), June, 1960.
Federal Hospital in Springfield, Missouri, but the judge refused. Instead he sentenced Meyer to thirty days in the DuPage County jail. Meyer guessed that "it turned out this way because there were no great pressure groups out to get me, and because some big guns of the peace movement came to my aid." 59 A letter from his father who was a United States Congressman at the time was probably helpful also. 60

The District Attorney may have been utilizing what he perceived to be an effective device against radicals, but in 1959 he may have actually believed that a person such as Meyer was mentally deranged. Why else would a person disrupt an otherwise orderly universe with demonstrations in Central Park, at the Omaha missile range, and now in downtown Chicago? In another time Meyer might have been a hero, but in 1959 he appeared to most as a deranged young man.

59 Ibid.

60 Copy of letters appear in Meyer's private papers. Other letters came from John Swomley of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and John Boellen of the Friends Peace Education Program. Attached to the F.O.R. letter was a resolution signed by the executive committee of the F.O.R. protesting the Court's handling of Meyer.
Between jail and demonstrations Meyer ran a Catholic Worker house where he fed and housed the poor. To him this act remained the most significant demonstration. In a letter to Dorothy Day he said that he sometimes got bored with marches and demonstrations, but referring to his Catholic Worker house he told her, "I am not bored here. We don't walk past the world and its problems. The world sits down for a cup of coffee and a word of consolation." 61

His personal approach to charity was similar to his personal involvement in the peace movement; he acted as an individual in hope that his action would spark similar action in others. Writing from prison, he once stated, "In order to have a revolution it is first of all necessary to begin. The non-violent revolution begins with a one-man revolution." 62 In an article on Karl Meyer which appeared in the *Daily News* a reporter concluded,

> It is this motive [personal responsibility] which makes the Catholic Worker tick, that moves him or her to demonstrate, picket, and engage in civil disobedience for the cause of pacifism, to espouse unpopular political causes, to aid the downtrodden, regardless of race or religion and go to jail if necessary. 63

61 *Catholic Worker* (New York), March, 1962.
63 *Daily News* (Chicago), March 27, 1964.
It was a desire to carry on his "one man revolution" that caused Meyer to take part in a march to Russia along with thirty other pacifists in 1961. This march was organized by the Committee for Non-Violent Action (CNVA), the same group that organized the Omaha demonstrations. It became one of the longest marches for peace in a decade which became noted for such demonstrations. Advising Dorothy Day of his plans he told her he would like to write a column on the march for the Catholic Worker. "I have an impulse to call it [the column] 'A Pilgrim of the Absolute' after Leon Bloy. . . . It is an absolute act of peace that I am seeking. . . ." he said.

Meyer joined the march, which had begun in San Francisco, in Chicago on April 5. The demonstrators planned to stop in Washington in hope of taking a message.

64 Lynd and Ferber, The Resistance, p. 17.

65 Karl Meyer to Dorothy Day, February 23, 1961. Catholic Worker papers. Leon Bloy was a favorite among Catholic Workers. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries he wrote bitter attacks on the bourgeoisie. His advocacy of voluntary poverty as a living protest against the bourgeoisie had an appeal to the Catholic Workers. His most famous work entitled Pilgrim of the Absolute is what Meyer was referring to in his letter. Leon Bloy, Pilgrim of the Absolute (New York: Pantheon Books, 1947), p. 175.
along with them from President Kennedy but they had to settle for a lecture on loyalty from Kennedy advisor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The professor explained to them the folly of their pacifism. "Morality has nothing to do with international relations," he told them. "These are matters of national interest and power." Criticizing their position on war, he stated, "Since pacifists renounce their military power they renounce responsibility," and since they could not "oppose aggression or other forms of evil . . . their position was irresponsible and immoral."

He dismissed the Gandhian alternative of non-violent resistance as unrealistic, explaining that Gandhi had succeeded in India because he had dealt with the basically humane British, not the brutal Communists.66

After leaving the United States and the warnings of Schlesinger behind, the marchers proceeded all the way to Moscow with very little trouble except at the French border where Meyer had a confrontation with the authorities. When a ferry brought the marchers from England to the port of Le Havre in France, the police there advised them that

they were not welcome. France had its own trouble with peace demonstrators, protesting the occupation of Algiers. The marchers had been warned that the police would fire on them, but Meyer laughed and jumped off the ship into the water. He swam to shore where he was greeted by hundreds of cheering Frenchmen. While distributing soggy leaflets which explained the purpose of the march, Meyer was arrested and placed in a LeHavre jail for three days.67

After this incident the marchers bypassed France and proceeded unhampered through Europe, arriving in Moscow in September. In the Russian capital they listened to speakers at a "peace rally" declare that unilateral disarmament was impossible as long as America posed such a serious threat to world peace.68

From Moscow the marchers flew home to New York where they attended a series of rallies and congratulated themselves for their daring. "They told us to tell it to Moscow," they exclaimed, "and we did." But Meyer was not as pleased with the march. He told one group of pacifists that the demonstrators never really talked to the Russian

67Ibid., p. 75.

people and very few understood the meaning of the march. Russia was still "virgin soil" as far as demonstrations were concerned, and he was troubled that there were no counterparts in Russia to groups like the American Friends Service Committee, or the Committee for Non-Violent Action. 69

So committed was he to this idea that he wrote a letter while in Russia to the Praesidium requesting a permanent visa. He told Dorothy Day that he wanted to become the Catholic Worker's reporter in Russia, and continue his "non-violent revolution." 70 The Russian government had no more use for Meyer or his kind than the American government did and his request for a permanent visa was denied. 71

On another occasion in the early sixties Meyer took to the road, this time to protest what he described as government compliance in premeditated murder. At a meeting in Chicago called to discuss tactics for opposing a pending death penalty bill, a minister chided Meyer for

69 Ibid.
70 Catholic Worker (New York), September, 1960.
71 Lyttle, You Come with Naked Hands, p. 205.
his indifference to petitioning legislators. "You can't
march to Moscow on this issue," the minister told him.
"We will have to work it out with the politicians."

The minister's reproach became an inspiration to Meyer and he
planned a one-man demonstration against capital punishment.

His idea unfolded the week before Easter in 1965, and was
reported in over a dozen newspapers from Chicago to Spring­
field. Meyer fashioned an electric chair, placed it in a
cart, and walked with it from Chicago to Springfield. He
carefully chose a route which included those areas of the
state where legislators remained undecided on a new bill
which would ban capital punishment. Mixing his theology
with his radicalism, Meyer staged the march before Easter
ending it in the capital on Good Friday in order to empha­
size to Christians that their founder had been a victim of
capital punishment. It was a clever idea, but not politi­
cally astute, since when he arrived in the afternoon all

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72 Meyer interview; also National Catholic Reporter, March 31, 1965.

73 Clippings in Meyer's private papers include stories appearing in Sun Times (Chicago), March 23, 1955; Courier (Champaign-Urbana), April 17, 1965; Illinois State Journal (Springfield), April 17, 1965; State Journal (Kankakee), April 9, 1965.

74 Meyer interview; map in Meyer's private papers.
the offices were closed for the holy day. 75

Meyer's march to Springfield was one of the last times he would appear as a lone voice in the wilderness. As the peace movement intensified after 1965, Meyer seemed less eccentric and more heroic to an increasing number of people. Writing from prison in 1959 he told Dorothy Day that "anyone who feels a responsibility for victory over death will see that if we project the present rate of growth of the peace movement into the next decade we can not have any hope of victory. Only an upheaval of grace can save man now." 76

The miracle which Meyer hoped for arrived, but it hardly qualified as "an upheaval of grace." The Viet Nam war ushered in an era of peace demonstrations more massive than this country had ever witnessed. Although he had not suspected it at the time, Meyer's prodding to "step up the agitation" and his own personal approach to non-violence had served as a great inspiration to the peace movement. Staughton Lynd remarked that in the early sixties "Karl Meyer for his part, continued to reach people. Among those

75 Meyer interview.

76 Karl Meyer to Dorothy Day, August 16, 1959, Catholic Worker papers.
who trace their radical commitment to Karl's influence is Charlie Fisher, one of the mainstays of the Boston Draft Resistance group in 1968 and 1969."  

One example of Meyer's influence on the emerging peace movement occurred in New York City on November 6, 1965. Two thousand persons, both war protestors and advocates, came to watch five young men burn their draft cards.  

Hecklers in the crowd chanted, "Give us joy, bomb Hanoi," and when Dorothy Day rose to speak, they shouted, "Moscow Mary!" When the five men started to burn their cards, counterdemonstrators drenched them with water. Tom Cornell recalled that he had hoped to remain calm, almost solemn to communicate the better what we were trying to do. But suddenly, as the flames started to consume our cards and my drenched trousers warmed to my body heat, I heard a voice from the crowd, strong and joyful, singing "This little light of mine."  

Commonweal reported that "seldom does there occur a


78 The five draft card burners were David McReynolds, Tom Cornell, Jim Wilson, Marc Edleman, and Ray Lisker. Cornell and Wilson were members of the New York Catholic Worker. The New York Times, November 7, 1965.

liturgical ceremony more impressive."80

Tom Cornell, a member of the New York Catholic Worker, explained that his action had been partly motivated by an article which Karl Meyer had recently written.81 During the summer of 1965 an irate Congress increased the penalty for draft card destruction to five years in jail and a ten thousand dollar fine. In reaction to this law, Meyer sent for a new draft card, destroyed it, and sent it to District Attorney Edward Hanrahan along with a letter which was reprinted in the Catholic Worker, the Peacemaker, and the News Notes of the Committee for Conscientious Objectors. He told Hanrahan,

If the penalty for damaging a piece of paper is so harsh, then the possession of the card becomes the universal act of fealty—incense on the altar of Caesar, the mutilation of humans in Viet Nam has become a civic virtue; now the mutilation of a scrap of paper becomes a grave crime against the state. . . . I feel anguish for the suffering victims and for the blindness of the executioners. I know I can not stop this crime, but as long as my voice is free I will cry out against it.82

In 1966 Meyer went with A. J. Muste to carry

80 Ibid.


82 Committee for Conscientious Objectors, News Notes 17 (September-October, 1965).
their crusade for peace to Viet Nam. As their plane landed in Saigon and taxied along the runway at Tan Son Nhay airport, Meyer witnessed first hand the horror of the war. He saw columns of smoke rising from crippled planes which smouldered from a Viet Cong mortar barrage the previous day which had left seven dead and one hundred fifty wounded. The physical scenes of destruction, however, did not leave as great an impact on Meyer as did the people of Viet Nam.

He spoke with the poet philosopher Nhat Hanh. This man, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1966 by Martin Luther King, was in the forefront of the Vietnamese peace movement when Meyer arrived there. His conversations with the poet had a great impact on Meyer. One idea in particular which Meyer repeated often while in Viet Nam came from Nhat Hanh. It appeared in a collection of poems which were eventually published in this country. In this poem Nhat Hanh stated,

83Karl Meyer, "Trip to Viet Nam," Meyer's private papers. Accompanying Meyer and Muste on this trip were William Davidson, chairman of the physics department at the Haverford College; Barbara Deming, an editor of Liberation; Shelly Thurber, secretary for the American Friends Services; and Bradford Lyttle, organizer of the San Francisco to Moscow march in 1961.
Men can not be our enemies--
Even men called Viet Cong
If we kill men
What brothers will we have left?
With whom shall we live then?84

The army tried to prevent Meyer from circulating in the city and talking with the Vietnamese peace groups, but as the Chicago Daily News reported, "U.S. officials had no choice but to give Meyer full press correspondent rights since he is an editor of the Catholic Worker in Chicago."85 The American pacifists were rebuked by most, but a small minority of Vietnamese welcomed their presence. In a letter signed by "a meeting of students from all Vietnamese universities" Meyer and Muste were thanked for coming to Vietnam. "We have had great emotion and excitement because of your work for the Vietnamese people," the letter stated. "It was the first time," the letter pointed out, that "our country had the great honour to welcome Americans who represent mankind's conscience."86


86 "A Meeting of Students from All Vietnamese Universities at Van Hanh Student Union Saigon" to "Six American Pacifists," Meyer's private papers.
Mrs. Ngo Ba Tanh, a former professor at the University of Saigon, told Meyer his trip to Saigon was a significant act. She explained that most people wanted to maintain friendly relations with the United States, but American military presence in support of a corrupt regime provided a great deal of propaganda ammunition for the Viet Cong. His presence, she told him, made it possible for anti-Americans in Vietnam to see another "kind of American . . . an American opposed to war." 87

The American pacifists planned a demonstration in front of the United States embassy, but the Vietnamese police thwarted their scheme. On Thursday, April 21, Meyer, Muste, and their companions were carried off the streets while marching to the embassy, thrown into a van, and transported to the airport. As police forced them up the ramp to their plane, Meyer tossed anti-war pamphlets to the crowd that had gathered. 88 One of these read,

We hold that the struggle for a peaceful and brotherly world should be carried on by non-violence. Above all, people have the right to be alive. We apologize to the people of Vietnam for the evil that our

87 Meyer, Trip to Viet Nam.
88 American (Chicago), April 22, 1965; Sun Times (Chicago), April 22, 1965.
country has done to them. On returning to Chicago, Meyer told a reporter, "The Vietnamese want the Viet Cong to stay out of their villages but they also want the Americans to stop bombing them." In his simple direct manner he commented that he doubted that the United States really desired peace. "If we believe in peace we wouldn't bomb them," he reasoned.

Jack Mably, commenting on Meyer's trip and expulsion from Vietnam, admitted that he disagreed with Meyer more often than not. But he confessed that he admired the young man because his motivation was simple, "he acts out of love for his fellow man." Nothing could describe him better. Movements did not compel him nor did popular ideas, but rather a simple personal commitment to his fellow man. After the Vietnam war and the protests against it had passed, Meyer continued his radical commitment. He maintained a Catholic Worker house and continued to write for the paper. In 1974, when another generation of Catholic Workers emerged, the fourth

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89 Pamphlet, Meyer's private papers, Meyer interview.  
90 American (Chicago), April 22, 1965.  
91 Ibid.
in Chicago, they went to Karl Meyer. He guided them, gave advice, and passed on the tradition of Catholic Worker personalism.92

For over forty years now there has been a Catholic Worker movement in Chicago. The faces have changed yet the ideals have not. In a world moving towards greater centralization and depersonalization Catholic Workers pursue the opposite. Outlandish in its proposition but diminutive measurable results, the Catholic Worker movement claims an important part in the intellectual history of the United States. It depicts the dominant mood of the country by protesting against it.

92 New house is at Kenmore and Lawrence Avenues. Meyer still writes for the Catholic Worker reporting on the Chicago scene.
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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

November 7, 1978
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